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ABSTRACT

Five essays on public uses of the humanities from the 1981 National Conference of State Humanities Councils are presented. After a foreword by Donald Gibson and an introduction by Steven Weiland, "The Uses and Status of Literature" by Catherine Stimpson is presented. She recommends that public programs in the humanities address the quarrels about literature itself. In "Quality in History Programs: From Celebration to Exploration of Values," Michael H. Frisch considers the "quality gap" in contemporary public history programming. As illustration, some issues and opportunities in community-based oral history projects are addressed. In "Scholarly Standards and Public Humanities Programs," William C. Havard discusses problems of inducing humanities scholars to participate in National Endowment for the Humanities' public programs, and the universities' role. In "Applied Humanities: Utility as Standard of Value in Public Programs" Barbara Hillyer Davis examines humanist in residence programs, while in "The Humanities and the State Councils: Retooling in the 1980s," Abraham Edel discusses the needs and values of programs of state humanities councils, self-assessment, and criticisms of the programs. (SW)

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What Portion in the World:

New Essays on Public Uses of the Humanities

Papers Presented at the 1981 National Conference of State Humanities Councils

Edited by Cynthia Buckingham, Michael Sherman, and Steven Weiland

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Foreword

The 1981 National Conference of State Humanities Councils occurred, in one sense, at a peculiar time in the history of the program. It was the tenth anniversary of the grant to the first state council, but there was, somewhat ironically, little celebratory ritual. Rather, most participants, inspired partially by the proposed reductions in Federal support, addressed themselves to a sober assessment of their past efforts and a tough-minded attempt to identify those program priorities, emphases, and procedures which would best serve the goals and objectives of the program during the next decade.

That emphasis was appropriate and timely, but we should not ignore an impressive record of accomplishment. The state program in the humanities, in a brief ten years, has been remarkably successful, uncommonly productive, in demonstrating that there is a need and purpose for its existence. In 1965, Congress challenged the Endowment and the humanities community to foster increased public understanding, appreciation, and use of the humanities and help ensure "wisdom and vision" in American democracy. In 1970, the Congress demanded further that the Endowment relate the humanities to the current conditions of national life.

In response, NEH established the state program, operating on certain fundamental, if untested, assumptions:

1) that de-centralized grant-making institutions, consisting of citizens drawn from the scholarly and public communities, could conduct responsive and accountable programs in the humanities;
2) that the public was interested; and
3) that scholars could communicate effectively outside of the classroom.

In 1981, it could be noted with pride that the program had established broadly-based and widely-respected institutions in each state. The achievements cannot be easily measured, but we can note the scholarly interest and the public demand by pointing to the fifteen thousand scholars who participated in projects during 1981 and thirty million Americans who benefitted. State councils have, in a brief decade, demonstrated that the original assumptions were sound. In one sense, the first phase of an experiment has been successfully concluded and that was appropriately noted at the 1981 National Conference.

It was also noted in Baltimore that the challenge continues and is, if anything, more subtle and more demanding. The state program is now in a position to deliver on some of its earlier promises, to build upon its successes, and to address some tough intellectual questions. What is the role of scholarship in public life? What do we expect to happen in a public humanities program? How do we measure our success? We have not answered the question of whether we are engaged in a program for the public or a public humanities program. The former, I believe, means that we are principally concerned with dissemination of information; the latter that we are engaging citizens in scholarly thinking and equipping them with some of the scholarly tools of analysis and synthesis.

State councils are in the best position of all educational and cultural institutions to address these questions. The sole interest of a council is the humanities and the general public; no other agency makes that claim.

One aspect of the challenge that faces state councils was eloquently expressed by Charles Frankel shortly before his death:

> Nothing has happened of greater importance in the history of American humanistic scholarship than the invitation of the government to scholars to think and teach with the presence of their fellow citizens in mind . . . .When humanistic scholars have been persuaded that they are really part of a larger community of their fellows, they have also made the largest contributions to their own disciplines. Plato, Machiavelli, John Locke, and James Madison are not remembered for being intellectual recluses. Indeed, there is one thing above all which a government can do for humanist scholars. It can give them a larger, better informed, more demanding audience that expects them to write well and think along with the public.

The Baltimore meeting provided, in my judgment, solid evidence that state humanities councils are equal to the challenge.

–Don Gibson
Director
NEH Division of State Programs

Introduction

So basic is the relation of the humanities to public life that we can with confidence assume that nearly any great work of literature or criticism, philosophy or history will comment on it directly or indirectly. In his 1919 collection *The Wild Swans at Coole*, William Butler Yeats chose the first method, for in several poems he considers the social circumstances of poets and poetry. In "The Scholars," for instance, he reveals his ambivalence about cloistered intellect:

> Bald heads forgetful of their sins,
> Old, learned, respectable bald heads
> Edit and annotate the lines
> That young men, tossing on their beds,
> Rhymed out in love's despair
> To flatter beauty's ignorant ear.
>
> All shuffle there; all cough in ink;
> All wear the carpet with their shoes;
> All think what other people think;
> All know the man their neighbour knows.
> Lord, what would they say
> Did their Catullus walk that way?

Learning and social esteem, Yeats says, do not guarantee that scholars will fully display the excitement of their subjects. It is, however, not only lifeless scholars who are sometimes indifferent to the highest virtues of learning. Pondering his anger at the Irish public in a poem called "The People," Yeats compares his instincts as a poet and scholar to those of a political activist.

> You, that have not lived in thought but deed,
> Can have the purity of a natural force,
> But I, whose virtues are the definitions
> Of the analytic mind, can neither close
> The eye of the mind nor keep my tongue
> from speech

Yeats' anger with the public for its ideological rigidity and intolerance was part of his equipment as a poet. One paradox of Yeats' career – as a poet, critic, dramatist, political polemicist, and even an Irish Senator for one term – was that he wrote so often of the impossibility of finding in literature a format for politics. In "On Being Asked for a War Poem" he pleaded the modesty of his talent.

> I think it better that in times like these
> A poet's mouth be silent, for in truth
> We have no gift to set a statesman right;
> He has had enough of meddling who can please
> A young girl in the indolence of her youth,
> Or an old man upon a winter's night.

The "times like these" were the years of World War II and Dublin's Easter Rebellion, and Yeats, paradoxically enough, wrote a poem about the impossibility of writing one.

Yeats made the relation of poets and poetry to society a major theme in his work. In one of his frequent versified conversations with himself (the one in *The Wild Swans at Coole* is called "Ego Dominus Tuus") he wonders about the motives and influences of poets who are simply,

> . . . lovers of life,
> Impulsive men that look for happiness
> And sing when they have found it.

Typically Yeats answers himself with a good counterargument, this one based on the assertion that "those that love the world serve it in action." Yet creative work, including scholarship, is still "the struggle of the fly in marmalade" and "art is but a vision of reality." It is the fate of many poets and humanists, Yeats says, to know the difficulty of making social commentary, or "action," of their work.

> What portion in the world can the artist have
> Who has awakened from the common dream
> But dissipation and despair?

What is certain, for Yeats at least, is that art and scholarship on public themes or with social purposes present problems in invention and interpretation which can make any "portion in the world" not entirely worth having.

It is an interest in defining and enlarging the portion of the world available to academic humanists that has animated the state humanities councils since the first few were organized in 1971 by the National Endowment for the Humanities. Part of the experiment has included continuing examination of their own purposes and techniques. In 1973, for instance, state council chairpersons and executive directors gathered in Washington to hear from distinguished scholars and NEH leaders. The *Proceedings* of the meeting (Washington D.C.: The National Endowment for the Humanities, 1974) include remarks by historian David Donald, literary scholar William Schaeffer, and philosopher Charles Frankel. Their enthusiasm for the still very new state program was based on their hope that public humanities projects would display the pleasures of the disciplines as their chief use. They hoped also that the application of the humanities to public affairs (as stipulated by Congress at the time as the chief mission of the fledgling state councils) would be

modest and realistic, in keeping with the virtues and limits of scholarship and pedagogy. John Barcroft, Director of the Division of Public Programs and a historian, urged recognition of the public policy emphasis as "crucial" but so too, he said, are the humanities. "This is not a program in public dialogue; it is a program in the humanities. It is not a program in policy analysis and resolution; it is a program in the humanities." The intellectual and organizational project entailed in the state program, then, was finding a "portion in the world" for humanists which would allow them to act as teachers and scholars while considering public issues.

A second collection of papers prepared for a national state council audience was published following the 1979 meeting in Philadelphia. This time, however, experienced staff members looked at the central disciplines of the humanities to determine how they make up *The Extracurricular Curriculum* (Minneapolis: National Federation of State Humanities Councils, 1980) available to both scholars and the public. These essays had the advantage of being able to draw on several years of experience in public humanities programs but they confirm Barcroft's view that the major problem facing state councils will never be solved. Indeed, rather than establishing once and for all the scholars' portion in the world, the state councils will continue to make the search one of its own best subjects. Relieved by a change in the 1976 federal legislation of the obligation to make every public humanities program address an issue of public policy, most councils have discovered that the possibility of doing so (and the difficulty) remain matters of great interest. What is new is the recognition that *all* programs which serve the public show how the humanities can find their "portion." Public interest, not only public policy, has become the benchmark.

In the essays which follow, prepared for the 1981 national conference of state councils in Baltimore, a new group of scholars looks at the past, present, and future of public humanities programs. The main issue, it hardly needs saying, remains the same: the relation of orthodox to new uses of the humanities, even sometimes the discovery of novelty in tradition. As Catherine Stimpson puts it, speaking of the versatility of literary criticism as a paradigm of the discussion of the humanities, it "wants us to be empathetic, to identify differences and to engage in the discourse of doubt – be the text Emily Dickinson or a government report, Emerson or a presidential press conference." The essays by Michael Frish, William Havard, and Barbara Hillyer Davis originate in similar assumptions but each suggests a particular aspect of the relation between the humanities and the public needing thoughtful and sustained attention. For, as Abraham Edel says in his admirably comprehensive account of the circumstances of the state councils, "there is much that we now know about our program and its achievements. Most important, we know that we are grown up, that we have worked out patterns of a relatively independent life so that, whatever the present crisis brings, we will endure."

Without claiming that the state councils have defined forever a public role for the humanities, Edel rejects Yeats' view that a social role for the artist or intellectual leads inevitably to disappointment. Edel and those who have worked on behalf of public humanities programs as state council members, staff, program planners, or participants – know that as long as the humanities remain the subject of their collaborative efforts the portion of the world occupied by the state councils will be large and active. Furthermore, by the example of their scholarship, Edel and his colleagues in this modest volume give us reason to doubt the inevitability of Lionel Trilling's prediction about the fate of ideas in innovative organizations and institutions. In *The Liberal Imagination* (1950) Trilling proposed that the good will and rationality which motivate programs aimed at the general welfare of citizens are finally cancelled out by want of intellect.

> Organization means delegation, and agencies, and bureaus, and technicians, and the ideas that can survive delegation, that can be passed on to agencies and bureaus and technicians, incline to be ideas of a certain kind and of a certain simplicity: they give up something of their largeness and modulation and complexity in order to survive. The lively sense of contingency and possibility, and of those exceptions to the rule which may be the beginning of the end of the rule – this sense does not suit well with the impulse to organization.

The impulse of the state program to look at itself is one of its organizational strengths, the same impulse toward inquiry and interpretation it supports in its projects. And among the possibilities it offers are not only fresh ideas and useful applications but the opportunity to shape at least a portion of the world according to the interests and methods of the humanities.

–Steven Weiland

The Uses and Status of Literature

by Catharine R. Stimpson

I

Literary people feed on ambiguity, irony, and self-reflexive styles. However, I wish to speak plainly. First, I admire public programs in the humanities and the state councils that sponsor them. They have staunchly defended arts and letters. At their wisest, they have warily avoided a vulgar insistence that one must choose between "public humanities" and "humanities for the public." With insufficient praise, they have responded pluralistically to local, state, and federal claims. Inevitably, they have sponsored a shambling failure here, a superficial panel there. They have permitted a hawk of social science to cry more loudly than a humanistic turtledove. Nevertheless, they have been an eager, benign, and modest presence during a century in which the brash has so often overwhelmed the eager, the brash the benign, and the arrogant the modest.

Next, I believe in the moral, cognitive, and emotional power of books. I am a literary professional whose academic training has never wholly repressed the child who smelled wax and varnish in a public library; memorized chapters of Louisa May Alcott in the third grade; and stayed up all night to read Norman Mailer in the ninth. I am aggrieved when people are hostile or indifferent to literature, or when they respond to it with mere politeness – as if literature were a distant relative to whom one had to send a Christmas card to but to whom one could deny the raucous compulsions of flesh-and-blood engagements.

Happily, most of the public humanities programs that I admire seem to share my beliefs. The Vermont Council on the Humanities and Public Issues has organized reading programs. Nearly half of the programs that the Virginia Foundation for the Humanities and Public Policy underwrote in the late 1970s included literary people. Nearly two thirds of the events the Ohio Humanities Council supported in the same period did so. Literature provided 142 of the 624 scholars that Ohio called upon – more than any field except history.[1] Because of the New York Council for the Humanities, I have lectured on Sylvia Plath in a theater, on literary treatments of the aging in a church basement, and on new scholarship about women in a college classroom. The National Federation of State Humanities Councils published two strong, smart, helpful essays about literature.[2]

Obviously, I encourage such practices and the use of literature in public programs. The word "use" has some difficulties. It threatens to reduce texts to sober, utilitarian functions even though one of art's gifts is its gratuitousness, playfulness, and a capacity to provoke mystery, wonder, a sense of magic. Moreover, we tend to be defensive when we wave "use" about – as if it were our shield against those who say literature is purely gratuitous. Finally, no one can predict precisely what happens when a text touches a reader, or a community of readers. It slips into the unconscious, to emerge later, often in altered form.

II

Nevertheless, literature has its uses. An example of them is a literary text itself: Doris Lessing's *Martha Quest*.[3] My choice of a narrative about a young girl growing up in Colonial Africa in the 1930s without the benefits of television may seem too distant. However, Lessing deliberately shows how literature generatively interacts with an individual consciousness, a nuclear reader, and how common interpretations of a text themselves generate a collectivity. Lessing also praises the individual who reads in order to develop a conscience, to become a citizen of some moral order. Significantly, in the epigraphs of *Martha Quest*, she places herself in a cultural tradition. She first quotes Olive Shreiner (1865-1920), her enabling example of a white woman who escaped from Colonial Africa and who transformed that courage into literature.

The opening scene of *Martha Quest* presents Martha as reader. Her mother and a neighbor are sitting on the verandah – knitting, talking about servants and children, gossiping about a local scandal. In contrast, Martha is holding a book that the Cohen boys, two adolescent Jewish radicals whose father runs a seedy little store, have lent her. Martha must gain access to literature through informal means, through friends. Today we have more formal conduits: schools, libraries, government programs. Despite the source, the relationship between reader and text may be ultimately similar. Martha is also displaying a copy of "Havelock Ellis on sex." (p. 3) She is using Ellis to signal her alienation from, her irritation with, a repressed and racist family. Yet, literature provokes her growth. It gives her an imaginative sense of other worlds, of possibilities. It offers a rehearsal of otherness. It provides an analysis of history and society that her immediate circles cannot. Her father

has a contract about white supremacy, not Engels, on his shelves.

To be sure, Martha ransacks texts. She misreads Schopenhauer and Nietzche, Whitman and Thoreau. She projects her needs and perceptions onto a book and then assumes, when she sees herself, that she has always been there. She will continue to rummage through books and magazines to take what she needs. Such inaccuracies, such thieveries, are less important than the fact of reading itself. A young girl, torn between a frail will and a questing consciousness, who wishes to be better than her circumstances, lives in the presence of the text as she constructs the self.

Lessing is no effusive sentimentalist. Martha discovers the limits of literature. It can become dated. Texts may seem remote, abstract, arcane, and ineffectual. One morning, on her father's farm, Martha skims through some books. She is legitimately restless. The books and she protest against poverty, but:

> The reasonable persuasiveness of the books seemed merely absurd, when one thought of the violent passions ranged against them. She imagined the author of books like these as a clean, plump, suave gentleman, shut in a firelit study behind drawn curtains, with no sound in his ears but the movement of his own thoughts.(p. 56)

On another morning, in the provincial capitol, she sees a file of handcuffed black prisoners. She feels "the oppression of a police state as if it were heavy on her...." She is morally exhausted, not only because of her immaturities, but because she knows that Dickens, Tolstoy, Hugo, Dostoevsky, and a dozen others have rebelled against such sights, but "all that noble and terrible indignation had done nothing, achieved nothing , the shout of anger from the nineteenth century might as well have been silent...." (pp. 166-167)

Moreover, Lessing is sardonically aware of a common discrepancy between a person's theoretical endorsement of literature and their actual use of it if they have power. At eighteen, Martha marries Douggie, a civil servant, a doomed and "proper" union. Before she conforms, she has vainly looked for a decent job. She has visited the *Zambesia News*. Its editor, the ironically named Mr. Spur, has told her as a child, "You must read. You must read everything that comes your way. It doesn't matter what you read at first, later you'll learn discrimination. Schools are no good." (p. 210)

However, Mr. Spur edits an ideological mess of a newspaper that serves only the most vulgar, ultimately self-destructive interests of the colonial power structure. He offers the young woman whom he once encouraged a job, which she will spurn, on the women's page. What Spur dramatizes as public figure, Douggie does as private man. He wants to be modern and scientific in bed. He enthusiastically buys Van der Velde's *Treatise on Marriage*. However, when he and Martha have sex, he is only erratically satisfying, only erratically generous, consistently superficial, and skin-deep.

The manipulations of a Spur, like the profound banality of a Douggie, are problems that a public humanities program persistently, often wearily, confronts. Obviously, much modern literature and culture, with its dissenting tradition, names those manipulations, and that banality. (It may also be less dissenting than it seems.) A Lessing mocks a Spur and a Douggie. She asks us to admire a Martha who will ultimately resist and transcend them. A Spur, a Douggie, will dislike that mockery, in literature or in life, and seek to contain it. Moreover, much literature, even many comedies, are relentless and unsparing acts. Writers, like Emily Dickinson, like a look of agony, because they know it's true. To use literature properly is inevitably to be at risk, to play King Lear's fool while praising the virtues of *King Lear*.

III

Two strategies of literary criticism itself reinforce literature's non-conformist habits. It asks readers to assent provisionally to the world of text; to act momentarily as if s/he might inhabit it, no matter how extraordinary it might be, no matter how strong one's resistances might be. Simultaneously, criticism applauds criticism, the interrogation of the text. It asks readers to shake a text to see what it might be concealing, what euphemisms it might be presenting, what codes it might be inscribing. Criticism wants us to be empathetic, to identify differences and to identify with difference, and to engage in the discourse of doubt – be the text Emily Dickinson or a government report, Emerson or a presidential press conference.

People who administer public humanities programs, like those who work in public libraries and schools today, will no more give up reading and writing because they can be risky than a Lessing will give up literature because it seems to be impotent. They also know far more acutely than I about the pressures some groups are now bringing to purge the humanities of their disagreeable features, their "secular humanism." They have sat in the antechambers of state legislatures to be told that the book version of the film *Alien* ought not to be read because it is

feminist scientific fiction. They are also far shrewder than I about the tactics of battle against the new centurions of censorship.

Consequently, I but softly suggest that public humanities programs have developed three practices that might be useful in the struggle against a militant philistinism and cultural rigidity. First, because they have endorsed some reinterpretations of the canon, they have nurtured constituencies that ought to support a public humanities program that is now under the gun. Many programs, for example, have given grants for events about women. Indeed, events about women seem to be unusually responsive to literature -- a reflection of the organizers' education and of women's presence as writers, subjects, and metaphors. In turn, a feminist community of readers ought now to support the humanities. Next, public programs have encouraged localism: the study of Appalachian narratives, of photographs of Ohio. Their attention to the *totality* of a place, of a specific environment, can counterbalance accusations that they toady to a set of values that upsets some residents of that place.

Finally, public programs have consistently deployed literature in an oddly pragmatic way. People have talked about books, not for themselves, but as guides to something else; as shafts of illumination; as a series of thoughts about death, or the family, or nutrition, or nuclear energy, or teen-age pregnancy. The book has been a means to an end. When events do present literature in and of itself, they tend to be the study of a local writer, Whitman of Camden, Williams of Paterson, or of Shakespeare -- the familiar and beloved Prince William of public programming, literature's own reliable masterpiece theater. Surprisingly, there are few programs, such as the one in New Jersey devoted to the syndicate that produced the Nancy Drew and the Hardy Boys series, that explore mass culture. So programmed, we mine literature, we pick at it, for what it says about a theme or topic. When I speak about *King Lear* and aging, I talk about Lear and Gloucester as old men. I perhaps ignore the tragedy's terrible rage against authority without authority, against lust and greed, against the gods who pluck at us as wanton boys do flies.

Such a practice has a great strength: it urges everyone to incorporate literature, and the humanities, freely into the context of everyday life, into moral and political and personal decisions. Literature becomes a lavish reservoir of forms and values into which any reader, or any group of readers, might dive. However, treating literature as ancillary to issues, which the mandate of the state councils has bred, also tempts us to water it down. It may also dilute the vitality, zeal, volatility, and surprising exuberance of contemporary literary studies. Today people are querying the status of literature as an activity, as a phenomenon. Their answers will help to determine how our culture thinks of literature, what its fundamental literary policies might be.

Some people are studying language and literacy, as vital to literature as light to photosynthesis. Others are asking, not simply about the linguistic acts of speaking and writing and reading, but about the relationships between visual and verbal literacy; between films and videotapes and the word. Public programs are fond of sponsoring films and videotapes. I have, in the past, cheerfully consented to advise media projects about women writers and poets. However, too few of us cleanly, explicitly show how our contemporary languages fit together, or collide. Sense, rather than wild imaginings, characterizes the Report of the Commission on the Humanities, but even it says:

> While preserving traditional methods, schools must recognize the new ones created by television. They must also cultivate what is sometimes called "media literacy" -- a critical awareness of how television affects our thinking. Television's power to inform has profound civic, aesthetic, and cultural implications. Like a written text, the voice from the screen will not answer a direct question; no less than a written text, however, it must be regarded with critical vigilance.[4]

Still, other people are renewing the study of literary history, of the psychic and cultural and social contexts from which texts emerge. Still others are revitalizing literary theory. As they do so, they are exploring narrative, story, dramatic sequence. To think about narrative may demand the subtleties of a specialist, but it can also restore the power of literature to charm, enchant, and enthrall.[5] Still others are passionately arguing about the nature of literature as a representative, a mimetic, gesture. The editor of a good collection of essays about contemporary criticism says:

> The most fundamental difference between the structuralist and post-structuralist enterprises can be seen in the shift from the problematic of the subject to the deconstruction of the concept of representation.[6]

Such a theoretical debate has an analog in the huge quarrel now about the privileges of religious texts. Do we treat the Bible, or the Koran, as a text, as discourse, or do we revere them as God's word, as the verbal signifier of the

divine? Do they have some historical powers or do they have sacred power? Finally, still other people are expanding our notion of the text and our sense of who produces texts. As we study women writers, for example, we begin to think of many kinds of writing as literary, and of many kinds of women as writers. The study of literature now includes such a book as *The Correspondence, Writings, Speeches* of Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony.[7] It ends as a novel might – with descriptions of the death of each woman; Anthony seeing the faces of the women with whom she had struggled for fifty years; Stanton drawing herself erect, to stand silently for seven or eight minutes, looking out, as if she were making yet another address.

IV

I am asking, then, for public programs in the humanities to present the emerging quarrels about literature itself, not simply to use literature to mediate between people and questions they ought to investigate. As I do so, I am also uttering the familiar invitation to literary humanists to be self-conscious, clear, and well-informed. Experience has forced us all to recognize that the ability to read professionally need not entail wisdom, or even sanity. The Frenchman who now claims that no Jew died in a gas chamber once wrote about Rimbaud.[8] Nor does scholarship breed a contagious intelligibility. A comment on an Ohio project rephrases Whitman's complaint about the learned astronomer whose proofs, figures, charts, and diagrams sickened the poet:

> While the two humanities scholars who conducted the discussion sessions were knowledgeable in their respective fields – English literature and jurisprudence – their program suffered from what appears to have been their lack of experience outside of the formal classroom. For example, even though they succeeded in showing that film criticism can be used to gain an increased awareness of ever-present family problems, they did not succeed in guiding the discussion in a way that provided participants with a strong sense of direction and accomplishment.[9]

However, I still faithfully call on professional readers to show the subtexts that guide their inquiry as well as their texts.

So doing, literary scholars might take up three other intellectually imperative tasks. First, they might ask how we translate, not from one natural language to another, but from a technical to a common tongue. How can scholarship be made accessible, without condescension, to a larger public? And how can the public be persuaded to dissolve its suspicion that scholars clothe trivia with jargon and timidity with intellectual snootiness?

For the past year or so, I have experienced with various translating techniques, for example, interviewing scholars in order to reveal person and theory simultaneously. A public program in the humanities might invest in a much larger effort to train scholars who might traverse the several languages we have devised to describe realities. Next, they might help us to survive a world in which we have a multiplicity of cultural phenomena. In a time of scarcity of financial resources, we have an increasing treasury of signs. Scholars might, through enjoying the plenitude of experiences that literature now offers, show us how to organize ourselves without any single cultural order. Finally, literary scholars, more forcefully objecting to the legislation that has divorced a humanities endowment from the arts, might help create events that engage performers as well as codifiers, producers of meaning and art as well as their judges.

Public programs in the humanities have used literature affectionately, respectfully, and dutifully. However, we must now reflect the controversies about this domain, these structures, that we have used so affectionately, so respectfully, and so dutifully. If we do not, this creature – of velvet and of the sword – may become dowdy and dull, and our affection and respect may atrophy into a dutifulness that pleases neither us, nor the public of which we are but a part.

NOTES

[1]I derive these comments from: Vermont Council on the Humanities and Public Issues, "Progress Report," March 1981; Ohio Humanities Council, "The Ohio Program in the Humanities 1981-1983," Feb. 1981; and Virginia Foundation for the Humanities and Public Policy, "A Statewide Program in the Humanities," Nov. 1980.

[2]Alan Shusterman, "The Public Study of Literature," and Richard Lewis, "Scholarship in the Humanities and the Public: The Case of Literature," *The Extracurricular Curriculum: Academic Disciplines and Public Humanities Programs*, ed. James P. Smith and Steven Weiland (Mpls., MN: National Federation of State Humanities Councils, 1980) pp. 17-35; 67-73.

[3]Doris Lessing, *Martha Quest* (New York: Plume Book, 1970, first published 1952). All quotations are from this text; page numbers are given parenthetically.

[4]*The Humanities in American Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980),p.46.

[5]See, for example the issue of *Critical Inquiry*, "On Narrative," 7, 1 (Autumn 1980).

[6]Josue V. Harari, "Critical Factions, Critical Fictions," *Textual Strategies: Perspectives in Post-Structuralist Criticism* (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1979), p. 19.

[7]Edited and with a critical commentary by Ellen Carol DuBois (New York: Schocken Books, 1981), 272 pp.

[8]For a scathing account, see Nadine Fresco, "The Denial of the Dead: The Faurisson Affair and Noam Chomsky," *Dissent*, 28, 4 (Fall 1981), pp. 467-483.

[9]Ohio Humanities Council, Project OPH-80-122.

Quality in History Programs: From Celebration to Exploration of Values

by Michael H. Frisch

I

The title to which I have been asked to respond not only raises questions, but suggests as well a framework in which they are to be answered. It suggests that history programs have been deficient to the extent they have focused on parochial celebrations, and that quality may be obtained by finding ways to shift the emphasis to a broader humanistic exploration of values. Beneath this formulation is an implicit assumption that such programs involve almost by definition a tension between public and community expectations, on the one hand, and the perspective brought by humanists on the other. There also seems to be a hint in the assigned title – despite the absence of an activating verb – that humanists ought to be more aggressive or less reticent about pushing for such broader exploration, and that funding agencies like the state humanities councils ought to be more insistent that proposals transcend the narrowly celebratory.

I am not so sure that this formulation is the most helpful way to get at what are some very real and pressing problems. Accordingly, I would like to begin by first recasting the issue somewhat. Then, I will explore, as a specific illustration, some issues and opportunities in a programming area I know well – community-based oral history projects. I hope this discussion will support a more general argument that quality in public history programs will not be found by regarding the genre itself as inherently problematic and beset by contradictory tensions. Rather, I want to show that public history offers some very special and unique characteristics that need only to be more fully appreciated and expressed in order for programming to become a source of value exploration and broader public meaning.

Let us begin, then, by taking a closer look at what is involved in the perceived "quality gap" in contemporary programming. In recent years, public history has sought to extend beyond the limits of conventional academic scholarship in several related dimensions: it has sought a broader audience, a broader sense of what (and whose) history is appropriate for public attention, whether celebratory or exploratory, and it has sought a broader range of participation in the process of actually "doing history" – in collecting, forming, assessing, and articulating a sense of the historical past.

Much of the recent criticism of public history programming has centered, variously, on whether it has gone too far or not far enough in some or all of these directions. Many have faulted programs for giving in to a tempting parochialism and not succeeding in introducing broader humanistic perspective and content. Other critics have charged that the impulse has been worse than parochial, introducing dangerously "presentist" populistic bottom-up orientations that have undercut a more appropriate and elevated discourse about history. In the hands of the Heritage Foundation (which wrote a report on NEH for the Reagan Administration), such criticisms have a transparently political purpose, but the concern must be acknowledged to be a wide one. There is a roughly parallel critique from the left as well: that public history has been on the verge of succeeding in opening the way to new questions, which is why there are now so many efforts to bring it under more direct professional and/or political control.

Now what is interesting about these varied criticisms is the degree to which they share certain assumptions, in particular the belief that there is an antithesis between professional and community roles and interests, and that there needs to be an alteration in one direction or the other. The politics of public history criticism, that is, often come down to debates about who is framing and executing the program, for what purposes, and for what audiences. These debates, in turn, are often worked out in terms of the appropriate qualifications of designers, the "mix" of participants, the "role" of humanists and community members, and the formats chosen for reaching specified audiences in intended ways.

What I am concerned about is the temptation to see the issue of quality as derived from, if not quite reducible to, such structural considerations. Any public program must, by definition, embody some resolution of these questions; its dimensions express the relationship between them. But given a structural mix, it seems to me at least arguable that the essential quality of a program may derive as much from the *process* of the interaction of elements, rather than their relative roles or proportions in the structure of a program. Rather than inquiring about the adequacy of community involvement or the sufficiency of the humanists' contribution, we might do better to take a closer look than often

obtains at how the program brings these elements together, and the room it allows for their interaction. This may seem only a slight adjustment of perspective, another way of saying the same thing, since obviously structure and process are closely related. But in my experience with oral history projects, the distinction is important and poorly understood: an overemphasis on formal structure has had much to do with the uneven quality of so many projects. Conversely, a greater sensitivity to process may help to diagnose the problem, and provide resources for its resolution at the same time.

II

It is easy to understand why oral history has been so close to the center of the explosion of public historical activity. As an activity and a program production tool it is unintimidating and accessible; its products are generally interesting and hardly exclusive in their appeal. It thus contributes readily to the three dimensions mentioned above: the broadening of the audience, of the subject matter and issue of concern, and of the participatory base in history-making. It is helping to refashion our sense of what history is, who does it, under what auspices, and to what end.

Yet oral history projects also stand very close to the center of the controversy about public funding for history programs. They have been singled out for special criticism in the Heritage Foundation report and other attacks. They have offered more than enough ammunition for those seeking to expose seemingly frivolous, poorly planned, make-work projects of little public significance or impact. There is a sense in which these attacks are a backhanded tribute to the way oral history programs have succeeded in challenging, or at least threatening, an established orthodoxy, both professional and community-based. But a fairminded analysis must conclude that there are legitimate grounds for concern. The very accessibility of oral history has made it too popular for its own good, and in some cases and places it has been embraced uncritically and with little preparation, conducted haphazardly, and presented indifferently. There is concern among practioners that a serious approach has turned into a fad, one that will inevitably raise unrealistic expectations and lead only to disappointment, with an inevitable devaluation of the currency of the overall field. Although my comments are not meant to characterize all or even most publicly funded projects, from a public history vantage point it seems safe to conclude that concern about the issue of quality is germane, perhaps urgently so.

Much recent discussion about oral history programs, consequently, has focused on what might be called the issue of quality control. In this, as in the industrial origin of the term, the emphasis has been more on control than on the definition of quality. Project planners, prodded by evaluators and program officers, have given great attention to reinforcing the role of humanist scholars, both to validate the historicity of oral testimony and to help assure that public presentations contribute to a broader historical vision. Meanwhile, academic humanists themselves have been working to improve the training of oral historians, to develop usable guidelines and criteria for evaluation of community oral history projects, and to institutionalize skills through new degree programs in public history.

These impulses are generally appropriate and often quite constructive, though they fall somewhat short of being self-evidently and universally appropriate, as seen in the growing feeling among experienced community historians that "credentialization" may be intended primarily to secure jobs for academics at the expense of the uncredentialed, or will at least have that effect. But beyond such problematic aspects, I would argue that much of the quality-control impulse is not so much right or wrong as it is simply beside the point. This is because the issue of quality in oral history programs has less to do with who is in control than with how the method is being understood, used, and presented more generally. And the differences that matter in this regard, it turns out, cannot be located comfortably along the frequently invoked spectrum that has nostalgic, uncritical, and naive amateurs at one end, and value-sensitive academic humanists at the other. These assertions require some discussion if an alternative landscape is to become accessible.

In a curious sense, oral history has been of such self-evident importance that few have stopped to think about what it is, beyond the obvious, that makes it worth pursuing. The term itself is provocative in this respect: it implies both the raw material for study, and the product of that study in some intelligible, communicable form. But the relation between the archiving and collecting of data and the production of history from it has been finessed in many projects. In some cases it has been ignored entirely, with -- in community based projects -- runaway tape collection the result. This is a problem present throughout the field, on a more professional basis as well, and whether the approach is

top-down or bottom-up. Information is not history in any other dimension of research, and there is no reason to make tape recording an exception. Intended public program use underscores the importance of understanding how oral history is to be used, beyond piling up cassettes on the library shelves. To date, however, most oral history projects have dealt with such issues obliquely, if at all. The prevailing emphasis has been on what can be termed – only partly in jest – a supply-side approach, more concerned with generating oral history materials than using them, and more concerned with displaying them than with presenting them critically to some clearly thought-through public purpose.

To understand why this is the case requires a closer look not at who is doing the projects under what control, but rather at the underlying assumptions informing much of this work. From this vantage point, I think it can be said that most oral historians proceed on the intuitive assumption that oral history does one of two things, or perhaps both. First, it provides a source of new information about otherwise inaccessible experience. In this sense, it is seen as a kind of searchlight throwing a beam of inquiry into an ordinarily unreachable corner of the attic of history. This presumes that what is discovered in this beam will then be incorporated into more traditional historical understandings, and evaluated for validity and significance with and against other kinds of information. The second approach assumes that conventional historical frameworks are not only inadequate, but more fundamentally obstructive of deeper understanding. In this sense oral history is offered as a way to bypass such obstacles, a short cut to a more direct, emotionally informed sense of "the way it was." What better way, in this view, to touch the "real" history than by communicating with it directly, rather than filtering everything through the usual screen of historical narrative, and pushing it all through the even more relentless and destructive mill of academic analysis. In this view, oral history is a method for obtaining first-person experience, and for presenting it with relatively little mediation by the intellectualizing and abstraction of scholarship.

In practice, oral history has tended to shuttle uncomfortably between these two poles, between what could be called the "more history" approach on the one hand, and an "anti-history" sense of the gestalt of the past on the other. These poles suggest quite different approaches to what and how oral history "means," and consequently to how it should be used in public programs. Moreover, these conceptual positions vastly complicate the issue of "quality," for they tend to have no necessary correlation with the structural issues we have mentioned – the role of academic humanists, the relation to particular audiences, and so on. For example, it is true that professional historians are often "written in" to oral history projects in order to validate the quality of the testimony collected and presented. Nevertheless, this structural role frequently has little critical impact because it reinforces assumptions already in place: many such projects are parochial precisely because they share, from an amateur standpoint, the "more history" orientation. In fact, they frequently are simply mirroring conventional history by chronicling community leaders, events, and contributions – and thus generating the very celebratory problems that a more professional orientation is expected to resolve.

Similarly, academic humanists themselves have often taken the lead in stressing the "anti-history" approach, especially in regard to the presentation of oral historical materials, seeking to upset conventional notions through the powerful images oral documents can convey. But this has sometimes made the problems only worse – humanists withhold the critical contributions they might make out of a desire to avoid imposing interpretation on people's experience. In some instances the reticence is less straightforward, leading to suspicions that material is being manipulated and shaped to a given end, then presented in a form that offers little room for historical reflection, appearing simply to be a vision grounded directly in oral testimony.

III

If I am correct that deeper divisions about the nature and purpose of oral history underlie debates about "quality" and undercut structural reforms seeking such quality, then perhaps a clearer understanding of what the oral method can do may be helpful in building a path to more satisfactory programming. My own work and a good deal of program evaluation suggests that this is exactly the case, that many of the qualitative dilemmas of program design and public presentation can be substantially diminished by a fuller appreciation of the processes of oral history and their public implications.

On this closer examination, it is readily apparent that the main value of oral history is neither in the "more history" or "anti-history" styles. The former requires substantial validation and contextualizing, easy enough in

scholarship but a real obstacle to public presentation; the second can hardly be taken very seriously as an approach to the immediacy of the past, since testimony recorded years after the fact can hardly be evidence of how experience felt at the time, or what people thought about it then, in the sense often claimed.

But these weaknesses are, in fact, oral history's strengths. Invert these disadvantages, and oral history emerges as a powerful tool for discovering, exploring, and evaluating the nature of the process of historical memory – how people make sense of their past, how they connect individual experience and its social context, how the past becomes part of the present, and how people use it to interpret their lives and the world around them. In an infrequently noted preface to *Hard Times,* Studs Terkel observed that the collection was really "a memory book, rather than one of hard facts and precise statistics." He quoted Steinbeck's Pa Joad, who said of another character: "He's telling the truth, awright. The truth for him. He wasn't makin' nothin' up." As Terkel suggests, memory is the key to the meaning and uses of oral history, not merely its imperfect means. It forces us to look at what interviews actually represent.

Oral history is a method that is unique in that it creates its own documents, documents that are by definition explicit dialogues about the past, with the "subject" necessarily triangulated between past experience and the present context of remembering. The centrality of the process, I believe, offers some important resources for public presentation and community-based programming. In the first place, it leads to a more mutually-reinforcing relationship between historians and "subjects." Historians have generally been uncomfortable with memory, committed as they are to notions of objectivity and truth beyond the subjectivity of individual and collective recall. Yet to the extent that these same historians frequently bemoan their isolation from public discourse, it may be useful to reflect on the power of shared memory to repair precisely this relationship and give it energy. History, Staughton Lynd observed, is simply people remembering things, a point made even clearer by noticing a linguistic curiosity: in English, we have no verb that corresponds to the noun history. We can talk about doing history, or studying it, but there is no way to express concisely the activity and process of rendering the past comprehensible. With the phenomenon of memory, this is not the case at all: in fact, the relationship is virtually reversed in that the noun memory cannot exist without presuming the active verb, to remember. Involved as well, also by definition, is the leap across time from the "then" of happening to the "now" of recall.

It is this kind of "active-ity," I think, that we often have in mind when we seek to design programs that are relevant and explore wider historical and not-so-historical values. In oral history, this quality emerges from the nature of the central process, and the forging of a connection between past and present is made by those on both sides of the tape recorder. Yet the engagement between the truths of history and the truths of memory is only implicit in the process of oral history – for its meaning to be more fully developed requires a self-conscious commitment by all concerned to explore the meaning of experience, and its connection to people's lives in the present.

Making informed reflection on memory the focus of oral history programming – as it is the heart of the methodology itself – turns out to be a good bit harder than it sounds, and not simply for technical reasons. Audiences, lay and professional, used to perceiving history from a safe distance often resist attempts at closing the gap, especially when that process collapses comfortable assumptions as well. Nevertheless, I am increasingly persuaded that such a focus holds an important key to the elusive quality we seek, precisely because of its ability to reduce the ground between humanists and community people without obliterating the distinction between their perspectives and without denying particular value to each. It provides, in short, an appropriate meeting ground for the common exploration of the meaning of historical experience. It recognizes that humanists have a crucial responsibility to provide perspective and questions helpful in this exploration process, but it also acknowledges that memory itself has much to teach, and that its vantage point is a valuable one for more general reflection. It leads to a genuine sharing – not only of historical experience, but of the "author-ity" for its interpretation.

IV

These considerations suggest some criteria for assessing public history programs based on oral history. My sense is that the greatest need is for projects that take seriously the task of involving people in exploring what it means to remember, and what to do with memories to make them active and alive, as opposed to mere objects of collection and classification. The vulnerability of oral history will only be increased, and quality further undermined, by continuing to focus, as

so many projects do, on the generation of overly general images of the past presented without serious reflection or discussion. It will not be helped by continuing to rely on professional humanists to validate and certify and interpret the experience of oral history informants.

Recently, I attended an ambitious labor history symposium that brought together academics, trade unionists, and community people. The symposium featured the presentation, both in person and on videotape, of oral history interviews concerning the militant strikes that organized steel workers in the 1930s, amidst great conflict and violence. It was a wonderful presentation, which the audience seemed to follow intently and with great enjoyment. It was not clear until one overheard comments in the lobby, however, that people had seen it very differently: many of the academics heard in the tapes evidence of the pervasiveness of class conflict, and a call to militance inspired by labor's heritage of struggle. But the trade-unionists seemed to come away with a very different message: recalling the "bad old days," they said, made them appreciate the distance between then and now, as measured by their current no-strike contracts, grievance procedures, and pension benefits. But the interviews had not focused on such messages in either sense, and the program offered no opportunity or framework for discussing, contrasting, and evaluating the connection of this particular past to the present. However vivid the testimony, and however professionally conducted, the history was simply offered for immediate consumption. The program ended where it should have begun.

My remarks have focused here on oral history programming, but I think the implications are broader. To focus on the process of interaction, and the distribution of interpretive authority more broadly among program participants, may be relevant in other areas as well. I have been involved, for instance, in designing a community-based public history program for the City of Philadelphia's 300th birthday celebration. Much of this will involve what might seem to be the opposite pole from oral history: computer-generated social-scientific data developed by the Philadelphia Social History Project. Yet in some ways our approach is similar to what I have been describing here: we want to distribute the resources and some of the skills through which people can be empowered to recreate for themselves a detailed portrait of their neighborhood and its people over time, and on this basis come to discuss the history of their neighborhood in relation to their current concerns as citizens. The focus will be neither on teaching lessons about the past, nor trying to "evoke" it: rather, the program will feature the process of active discovery, in order to liberate the imagination process, informed as well by all the experience, knowledge, and perspective that people bring to the event.

This leads to a more general observation. My own experience in public history convinces me that the crisis of quality is real and must be addressed. Yet I think we need to appreciate and understand the extent to which the distinctive nature of public historical processes – in contrast to either formal academic work or conventional antiquarian local history – offers, in itself, the resources for responding to this crisis. Clearly, broad humanistic perspective, reflection, and interpretation must be central to the process. But closer attention to the nature of public history also suggests the importance of humanists relinquishing what in many cases has been a kind of interpretive monopoly, and to find better ways of sharing this authority with the relevent publics. This is not without its risks. But they are worth taking, for it is only in this way that we can move from the static celebration of the past towards what must – to have any value – be a mutual and active exploration of values.

Scholarly Standards and Public Humanities Programs

by William C. Havard

I

In the face of the individual and social disorders of the twentieth century, traditional ideas have increasingly become the basis for challenging the perception that man can turn the inevitability of change into absolute good by translating "scientific" knowledge into an instrument of power for controlling the direction and extent of change in nature, man, and society at any given time or place. The scholar in the humanities should be the first to realize, by the very nature of the effort to get a hold on the meaning of human experience and make its seemingly chaotic fluctuation coherent, that preservation of a historically accrued cultural tradition and an understanding of its deeper meaning – both symbolically and affectively expressed – is at least as important as the effort to effect change through the specific application of technical solutions to perceived problems. Indeed, a grasp of the "thick" meaning of that culture may be an indispensible pre-condition for the successful application of a technical solution to any social problem.

Knowing more about the historical development of the humanistic discipline will help us in understanding the humanities, and especially the way assumption of that role might pose a challenge to scholarly integrity. In the first place, it may assist in clarifying the way in which those engaged as practitioners of the humanities either surrendered their roles in enhancing the public understanding of the general nature of the society and its values, or were displaced in those roles by the forces of modernity. What T.S. Eliot called the "dissociation of sensibility" meant, at least in part, that the notion of an integral human nature, including appreciation of the complex interplay of emotional and rational qualities that affected the way in which human experience could be ordered to attain the good life, was yielding to a conception of man as a being in whom instrumental reason serves utilitarian functions, and whose other "goods" are subjective matters of taste that have no solid grounding in the common human capacity to apply right reason to the quest for the apprehension of truth, beauty, and justice, and of their interrelations.

In the second place, origins of modernity can provide insight into what happened to education, especially public higher education, in America during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Here the old classical center around which liberal education was organized gave way to two tendencies that are related to the emphasis on the so-called "knowledge explosion." One was the increasing specialization of the disciplines and the segmentation of knowledge into discrete parts, so that the effort at holistic understanding (undergirded precisely by the urge to understand the relevance of all knowledge to the possibility of living a good life in a good society) gave way to the imperative demand for the steady increase of "useful" knowledge, i.e., technical knowledge applicable to the domination of nature and psychological and sociological manipulation of man and society. The other was the steady growth of vocational education (often reduced to "training") in anticipation of meeting projected "manpower needs," primarily for production of "external goods" – the lowest (if foundationally necessary) order of goods in the classical hierarchy. In the world of late modernity, Aristotle's "external goods" are accurately referred to as "consumer goods," and these are, by implication, the *only* goods recognized in a *public* order of value.

Of course we have continued to teach history, languages, philosophy, literature, the fine and performing arts, and religion as part of the liberal arts (and some of these subjects are included as a sort of "cultural" sop in the "professional" schools that now range into some rather strange specializations). But follow any supposedly serious faculty discussion on curricular matters in a large university, even in its College of Arts and Sciences, and notice the extent to which claims on "shares" of the total graduation requirements are advanced confidently by those in the sciences and "applied" areas in terms of the need for mastering in an aggregative way an ever-enlarging body of precise knowledge that has long-range or, in the case of professional or "applied" schools, immediate utility. In some places the remnants of civility prevent the outright assertion of Henry Ford's succinct dismissal of history as "bunk," but the patronization of the humanities in terms of their epistemic weaknesses and "practical" uselessness is so patent that it suggests the old cliché, "I don't know anything about art, but I know what I like," with the implied tag that that's all anybody knows or needs to know about such things. By contrast, scholars in the humanities are likely to play defensively into the self-assurances of their colleagues, e.g., by pushing utilitarian communicational values as

the justification for the study of languages, both native and foreign, by reducing philosophy to the analytical confines of logical positivism, and by accepting relativism and subjectivism as the natural foundation of critical efforts to make aesthetic judgments in literature and the arts.

II

And here we see evidence of the extent to which many scholars in the humanities have tacitly, and sometimes even explicitly, accepted the educational role to which modernist culture has relegated them, a role that has imposed serious constraints on the willingness of scholars in the humanities to participate in public programs. One might describe the attitude as one of diffidence arising from doubts about the very nature of knowledge in the humanities and the consequences of applying that knowledge as a guide to choices among alternative courses of moral and political action. Historically, the humanities have been concerned with the nature and condition of man, and especially with the identification and exploration of those unique qualities in man that enable him to transcend his corporeal being and become a creative participant (within limits) in the natural order of which he is a part. In brief, the humanities are concerned with human consciousness, rationality, language, the range of emotions higher than the purely appetitive passions, and the openness of the soul to intimations of transcendence. The humanities are concerned with what these attributes contribute to human activities, including the critical examination of the full range of human experience in the attempt to make it coherent, the symbolization of that understanding of experience in ways that can be shared and thus serve as reasoned guides to individual and social good, truth and beauty, and ultimately the philosophical effort to perceive the congruence of all these "values."

The contingent and syncretic nature of knowledge about such things requires that the quest for understanding be a continuous effort at *recovery* (as opposed to simple extension) of meaning, and the creation or re-creation of symbols by which that meaning is preserved and communicated. The kinds of knowledge sought by the humanities in trying to understand man's place in, and effect on, the order of being, and the continuous application of that understanding to the conduct of our individual and social lives, is an indispensable ground of both theory and practice. It is subject to conflation with those sciences dealing solely with the structure of external phenomena only at the peril of civilized existence. In this connection it must be noted that a substantial disillusionment with the promise of enlightened modernity to solve all the problems of man and society by means of technologies generated through instrumental reason has recently opened new opportunities for scholars in the humanities. These opportunities not only include the expansion of the quest for the recovery, extension, and integration of knowledge about the potential and limitation of man in relation to the conduct of his private and public life, but open up the possibility of increasing the effective influence of the humanities through resumption of a public role in the dissemination of that knowledge. Environmental pollution; profligate use of resources; the generation of a society shaped by uncontrolled economic demand; and the growing recognition that proliferation of "entitlements" ranging from welfare programs to insurance against failure for the corporate giants of industry and government does little if anything to rehabilitate individuals, families, businesses, and communities; urban decay; crime; social disintegration; institutional corruption; and all sorts of other "crises," foreign and domestic, suggest that our problems (including even our economic ones) are more involved with questions of ends and purposes; obligations, choices, and values; moral and political conditions of social cohesion, and reconciliation of individual and group conflict than with the imposition of policies designed as technically structured solutions to a massive range of discretely perceived problems.

The public role of the scholar in the humanities, then, is best conceived as one that is indirectly devoted to the enhancement of the understanding of the larger context – natural, human, historical, social and cultural – out of which the moral, political, and pragmatic problems of ordinary life present themselves, and within the confines of which they have to be resolved. If the humanities cannot do anything to affect the shaping of that larger context, talk about participation in public programs in the humanities without sacrificing scholarly standards is futile, because the standards of knowledge in the humanities have to be deeply rooted in the partly self-structured human being and the self-interpretation of the society in which he subsists if moral and political actions are to be directed toward right ends realized through appropriate means. Thus it may be said that we confront a paradox in which the restoration of confidence in the place of knowledge in the humanities and the reconstitution of the standards by which that knowledge is evaluated

and applied depend on the scholar's acceptance of a public role, not only as part of the purpose for pursuing a vocation in the humanities, but also as an indispensable source of the kind of critical and integrative knowledge sought by those in the humanities.

III

When we look at the concrete problem of inducing scholars in the humanities to greater participation in NEH public programs, two problems present themselves. Both involve the necessity for alterations in structural arrangements and the organization and administration of the programs on the part of the NEH, as well as among the cooperating institutions (educational or otherwise) with which the scholars are affiliated. Yet structural changes will not be sufficient in themselves to establish clear objectives for programs or shape their substance to the realization of those objectives. The first problem relates to incentives; the second to scope, continuity and breadth of public dissemination of the programs themselves (a persisting problem throughout NEH, but an especially plaguing one in the Division of Public Programs).

It has often been noted that the system of rewards, both tangible and intangible, in the contemporary American university is based almost exclusively on research and publication. Reputation among one's peers is likely to be most readily gained by working in a narrow area of specialization (preferably becoming *the expert* on one subject in the discipline) and presenting one's findings in appropriate periodicals and monographs that employ a language whose construction and terminology are unique to a particular cluster of disciplines, so that one can be assured of engaging in discourse only with one's peers. It also helps to confine one's teaching as nearly as possible to graduate studies, through which one is able to produce intellectual progeny who will help expand the research "output" (computer jargon is the currently prevailing dehumanized lexographic fad, even in the humanities). When their "training" is complete the intellectual offspring can be placed in other institutions where they will spread the reputation of the academic sire. It is interesting to contrast such a portrait with that of Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, or medieval scholars who set up in a public forum and drew students to them in the common pursuit of knowledge.

Now I am far from wanting to deinstitutionalize higher education, but I do think that a public educational role involving the very best scholars in the humanities would be a boon to the humanities, the university, and society. And it should not be too difficult to provide direct incentives for scholars to engage in such activities, especially if the initiative (and model) comes from some of the highly reputable scholars in the humanities with the support of NEH. However, the established units through which universities now maintain educational programs for the public, such as extension divisions in land grant universities, cannot be depended on to do the job because even where these agencies hold out promises in the form of "general extension" programs in addition to the old cooperative agricultural and technical assistance programs, the bureaucratic, politically self-protective responses are too strong to permit serious consideration of programs in the humanities. It is, after all, not too easy to calculate immediate utilitarian returns from the dissemination of knowledge in the humanities. These organizations are further handicapped by their accepted roles in providing "information" and direct assistance to their "clienteles," so they tend to be suspicious of a direct engagement with the dialectical give and take characteristic of the disciplines in the humanities. And even though extension divisions are sufficiently independent to be able to reward their academic employees for "public service," the funding for extension programs is from federal government sources, and the connection with the university is too tenuous to enable the extension service to influence the rewards system in the other areas of the universities to which they are attached.

Partly because of these circumstances, it seems to me, the largest portion of the NEH public programs, and especially the state council funded programs, are carried out by community colleges that place great emphasis on community relations (in which adult education plays a prominent part) and are willing to reward their faculties for this type of service. I am not implying that this is a bad thing, and it is true that those who conduct public humanities programs out of these institutions often co-opt recognized, and even distinguished, scholars as featured speakers or discussants in these programs (at suitable honoraria, of course). But I do think that the problems of public programs are sufficiently important that the leading scholars in the humanities need to address them, and the only way they can do this effectively is by cooperative action to generate their own organizations for planning and carrying out public programs in the humanities with direct support from their respective universities, and with the understanding on the part of both

faculties and administrations that they are engaged in a *bona fide* higher educational function that justifies rewards commensurate with those of any other teaching and/or research service. Furthermore, the standards of evaluation of the performances on which those rewards are based must be equivalent to those applicable to any academic function carried on by the university. This can probably be accomplished only through the formation of multi-purpose, multi-disciplinary Centers for the Humanities, with a public role clearly defined as one of their activities.

The incorporation of a public role for the humanities into the regular educational program of the university will not automatically produce other (less tangible) rewards that come from participation in public programs, but it may induce more scholars to seek them, at least experimentally, if the scholars they most respect serve as models in demonstrating that they can participate without sacrificing their standards, and in doing so actually add to their own professional stature. My experience in working with NEH and other types of public educational programs based on the humanities convinces me that there are psychic satisfactions and creative possibilities in these activities that are not available through any other academic pursuit. Without trying to be exhaustive, these include the pleasure of working with a more diversified group of people than those represented in most formal student bodies, the challenging stimulus that "adult, out-of-school publics" provide the cloistered academician in developing imaginative ways of teaching that go beyond mere information peddling (including the development of written and audio-visual materials that incorporate a research dimension into public programs), and the joy of recognizing the natural receptivity on the part of these groups to the forms of knowledge available through the humanities because experience has revealed the need for personal development that goes beyond the direct improvement of occupational skills. And one must not forget to add the opportunity for extending the scholar's own learning through observation of the ways in which the culture has shaped those lives in accordance with an established, coherent structure of values. The tendency to intellectual patronization on the part of the scholar (a cardinal academic sin rooted in pride) may even be reduced by these contacts as he or she perceives that a self-developed common sense grasp of the implications of one's traditional cultural, moral, and social values sometimes provides a surer foundation for conducting our private and public lives than the heady abstractions of the scholar.

IV

If scholars in the humanities are to be attracted to increased participation in public programs, and the universities they inhabit are to be called on to revamp the institutional supports for such activities without compromising the standards of either, some alterations in NEH's public program policies would also seem to be called for. As I have worked with and observed NEH public programs (and especially the state program) for nearly a decade, I have been most impressed by the spontaneity and enthusiasm with which so many volunteers have responded to NEH's efforts to develop these programs. But I have some strong reservations about the total effect of the programs relative to the commitments of resources and energy that have been made to them. These reservations concern the lack of continuity in the programs and the related problem of the amount of time, money, and human energy given to proposal development, competitive screening of proposals for regrant awards, reporting, and evaluation compared to the effort devoted to planning and conducting the programs themselves. In this respect it might be said that some aspects of the overall program seem to be organized and others underorganized.

On the issue of lack of continuity, most of the programs have been short term, single shot efforts, with insufficient attention being paid to repeating programs for different audiences or developing variations on, or extensions of, programs judged to be successful. Much attention has also been given to "audience building," and a related practice of evaluating the effects of programs on the basis of the sheer number of people who attended sessions or were estimated to have heard the whole or portions of presentations on the radio or television. Perhaps because of these circumstances, little effort seems to have been made to develop and fully use original reading, listening, and viewing materials in connection with programs. Even when such materials have been prepared, arrangements for preserving and disseminating them for further use have been haphazard or non-existent. Bringing the humanities to the public requires a much more careful assessment of the types of programs needed, the purposes they are designed to serve, and more comprehensive (and thus longer term) programs aimed at those seriously interested in the knowledge that the humanities affords. It also requires the careful selection of participating

scholars who are themselves prepared to make long range commitments to planning and conducting programs, and to the development of the educational materials best suitable for use in them.

To overcome these perceived deficiencies requires somewhat different modes of operation than those currently in use. I believe the organization of the National Federation of State Humanities Councils and the development of its publication program are steps in this direction. But NEH and state councils and staffs need to develop closer relations with universities (and perhaps other institutions) from which participating scholars can be drawn, and especially with those universities that are willing to make commitments to public programs along the lines suggested in the discussion of incentives.

By the same token, a simultaneous effort needs to be made to ascertain the extent and focus of interest in programs of larger dimension, and thus draw potential subscribers (not "audiences") into the generation and planning of them. And this will necessarily involve the further development of cooperation with organized groups – business, labor, professional, service, governmental, and perhaps others – who not only have an interest in personal development of the type that the humanities disciplines can provide, but may even be willing to meet the whole or part of the costs of the programs, especially if the cooperating universities are providing some direct or indirect financial support for these activities. Thus NEH might not only be able to reduce its direct costs in this way, but should also be able to produce economies of scale by channeling fewer (but larger) grants through educational institutions that are already fully equipped for planning, conducting, and reviewing carefully focussed, long range programs involving substantial numbers of scholars of established reputation representing all the disciplines in the humanities. Furthermore, by concentrating the proliferated application, reporting, and evaluation processes now in use, additional savings can be effected even while higher standards are being applied. Finally, more inter-institutional cooperation could be sought with other divisions of NEH and with public radio and television, institutes of public policy, and university presses, with a view to enhancing opportunities for research, development, and dissemination of educational materials associated with public programs.

Given the combination of experience and continued enthusiasm that characterize the NEH public programs, I think these suggestions for institutionalization (or other arrangements similar to them) could be carried out without the threat of bureaucratic rigidification. The challenge is admittedly a large one, but if it is addressed boldly, following careful advance preparation, the best interests of the humanities, as well as the public interest in preserving our cultural heritage and adapting it to changing historical circumstances, could be well served.

Applied Humanities: Utility as Standard of Value in Public Programs

by Barbara Hillyer Davis

I

In the early years of the state-based programs, we often addressed the question of the usefulness of the humanities as we tried to reason with others who saw no connection between our "ivory tower" and their "real world." But we ourselves had little doubt about the value of applying the humanities to the public policy issues that were the focal point of all our programs. The humanities were applied to these issues to improve the public understanding. An informed and thoughtful citizenry was the goal and that was that. This is still the usual goal of our public policy programs. Although the program itself may fall short, we are pretty clear about our intentions.

The question of whether the humanities *should be* applied became more vital to the state councils after 1976 as we revised our guidelines to permit more "pure" humanities programs. Some academic humanists, now called "scholars in the humanities," had argued all along that the humanities they practiced were not always fitted to policy discussion. Now some of us began to agree some of the time, and we supported a variety of programs, especially in the areas of literature and local history, which might be described as less immediately useful than the implied preparation for citizenry of public policy programs.

In a sense, our rhetoric about the novelty of these departures and the debates about the extent to which we were willing to "replicate other NEH categories," revealed our participation in the old, invidious, and at best partly true dichotomy between the ivory tower and the real world. We announced with flourishes that we would do some programming that might seem – well, useless – merely humanities appreciation.

The distinction between useful and not-so-useful programs is profoundly untrue to the character of any good humanities project, because it is always useful to understand oneself better and to understand something more about the human condition. It seems extraordinarily perverse to assume otherwise.

What does it mean, then, to single out some of our programs as "applied" humanities, to evaluate their usefulness?

It interests me that in this area, as in much of the rest of our collective intellectual life, we are so given to dichotomizing. I have accumulated quite an extensive collection of essays on the nature of the humanities, most of them from activities of the state councils, and while these contain a lot of generalized praise for the integrative potential of the humanities, they are filled with dichotomies: between academic and public life, between general and specific publics, between the elite and the popular, between intellectual and anti-intellectual, between analysis and experience, and, yes, between useful and not-so-useful humanities programs.

It is commonplace in my field, Women's Studies, to suspect or reject dichotomies as "masculinist." The tendency of our culture and our language to dichotomize is believed to derive from dichotomizing male and female or masculine and feminine – from defining the human experience from a male perspective: us (male) human beings and those very different (female) others. This concept should, I think, be of interest to male humanities scholars since the humanities and the social sciences are often dichotomized on a feminine/masculine scale. Consider the "softness" of the humanities as compared to the "hard" sciences, the contrast between the sensitive or emotional poet and the rational or pragmatic mathematician or engineer.

Women's Studies scholars attempt to integrate the concept of *humanity* and also of the humanities disciplines to include the experience of women. As Mary Daly, in her work on the "Metaethics of Radical Feminism," has said,

> The fact that the Renaissance is exalted as the "rebirth of humanism" is a blatant indication that "humanism" is *not* universal, since it does not include women. Thus *humanism* functions as a pseudogeneric term . . . ."[1]

In the state program we have done substantially more than most on-campus humanities departments toward making the term more generic; the record is uneven, but most states have supported programming that includes women's experience in the philosophy, history and literature that are addressed. And we have even, on occasion, rejected proposals that did not include a women's perspective.

What I am interested in doing here is looking with equal skepticism at *utility* as a falsely dichotomous term, implying an opposite, *useless* –or at the idea of "applied" humanities, (implying "inapplicable"?). In every case, I would suggest, successful humanities programs *have their uses*, even or perhaps especially where there is no measurable product. A humanities perspective represents an angle of vision or a process of seeing and that is useful.

II

Because our early programs were in the area of public policy, we were pressed to define what we mean by "non-advocacy" and thus to articulate the idea that humanities programs are not oriented toward production of tangible results or specific conclusions but are, rather, intended to display a learning process.

The process is an intellectual one. The fact is that humanities scholars are intellectuals, though they may also be plain folks. I notice that we have begun to admit this more freely in the 1980s, perhaps because of our distance from the 1960s' mistrust of academics or because of the resurgence of anti-intellectualism in government. Whatever the reason, Richard Hofstadter's *Anti-Intellectualism in American Life*[2] is quoted as often these days as it was in the early 1960s when it was published. As the religious/political right attacks our "humanism," we respond by defining our historic roots and also by acknowledging our intellectual bias.

So the process and not a conclusion is the essence of our presentations and it is an intellectual process. My files of descriptions of projects set forth the crucial ingredients of the process: analysis, interpretation, evaluation, comparison, description, clarification, examination of assumptions, restatement, reconstruction, reassessment. The humanities scholar demonstrates how one thinks through an issue, an idea, a text. The aim for humanist and audience alike is critical understanding.

This process is expressed in reasoned discourse. The importance of discussion to the process itself cannot be over-estimated. Those Renaissance humanists from whom we have drawn our earliest models believed that they had an obligation to transmit and interpret a body of knowledge, to pass down a newly rediscovered cultural tradition. That is what many of our public programs also propose to do, but in most cases we try to do something more: to discover new connections, to develop ideas through dialectic. The humanities scholar presents a model of careful thinking, but it is not the recapitulation of a closed system. It is open-minded, and as participants learn to appreciate this, to enjoy differences of opinion, the scholar's own ideas may expand or be refocussed.

Most of our published discussions of the process are written at a level of abstraction about like that in my last paragraph. To see this process concretely enough to make sense of it, one must know the text on which the discussion is based, for study, the close reading of texts, is preeminently the work upon which our discourse is based.

The idea that study and textual analysis are essential to the humanities was central to the scholars of classical antiquity and to the Renaissance humanists. The general idea that man (remember that this is a psuedogeneric) can determine his own becoming implies that he (sic) must know enough to make good choices, and this requires that he study the range of human possibility. The Renaissance humanist usually attempted this feat by reading the classics. He might, for example, read Plutarch's lives to see how certain individual human choices led to certain results or spend a lifetime learning to read a text from a long lost civilization. If he reads the text and understands it, he will in the process learn to understand himself as a participant in the human condition; he will see what the individual self is capable of.

The humanities scholar edits and interprets texts, places them in an appropriate, accurately described context, attempts to understand the text's historical and aesthetic sources, and identifies the characteristic cultural expressions or key assumptions. To identify the kinds of background information which enrich and clarify the meaning of the text enables the scholar to understand her or himself better. The process is to explore and explain the assumptions behind positions, the differences between several possible attitudes toward a given issue.

The Renaissance scholar both interpreted and transmitted the *studias humanitas*. Study, thus, inevitably includes writing, lecturing and discourse. It is not enough merely to read the text. One must isolate and describe the individual experience or perception of the text and then communicate this experience/perception. In our time, a useful example of the pattern is the activity of the Mellon scholars, who are expected to sift through the complex arguments of special interest groups for ideas and then to write reports on those ideas for their Congressional sponsors.[3]

Studying, writing and lecturing are characteristic of academic enterprise in the humanities. Our question has always been how to do these things in the public sector, how to cause scholars in the humanities to think and write and work in a more public fashion.

There is not necessarily a real dichotomy between classroom and public presentation. We observe that teachers who do this well in classrooms from the students' point of view also do it well for the out of school public. The trick is to present the material so that the listener knows

enough to think intelligently about the subject, too. Such a presentation is much more probable when both parties have access to the necessary text.

People do study outside of classrooms. Most of us would be hard put to match, for instance, the public sector knowledge of active members of the League of Women Voters, and humanists in public programs have been repeatedly impressed with the range and depth of information on program topics demonstrated by the "public sector" participants. Anne Milbrook, historian in residence in five New England historical societies, has emphasized the impressive extent to which other people pursue her career area as *recreational* for themselves.[4] Public discourse, which brings the ideas of these people together with the ideas of humanities scholars, can enrich the thought of both.

The necessary text, which in classrooms may still resemble the ones used by our Renaissance forbears, cannot be so narrowly defined for public programs. The prospectus for the *Journal of Humanities in Society* explains:

> In our time humanities scholars understand by "text" all human action that is formal and symbolic . . . a text is not an object but an historical event precipitating an historical relationship of the reader to what is read.

Meaning, the editors go on to say, is a function of the referential as well as the historical significance of words. Although this *Journal* proposes itself as a place for written communication of the humanities process, the proposed activity of the editors includes public discourse.[5]

The process is that some human experience is studied directly and through reading, the scholar experiences, studies, reads, writes, and discusses. Each of these activities involves new experiences which renew the cycle of reflection, reading, writing, and discussing. Concretely, we have usually assigned as texts for our programs panel discussions, lectures, films, oral readings, or theatrical performances. Only occasionally have we funded programs specifically designated as study groups. But R. Oakley Winters, criticizing some of past efforts at engaging business executives in humanities discussions, emphasizes the importance of appropriate texts to the process. The keys to enabling business people to participate are, he says, time, setting, climate of inquiry, and text.[6] My own experience with a project that included film and book discussion among several other options was that people were willing to work hard at analysis and interpretation if the process (not necessarily the goal) seems rewarding. The use of literature enables participants to identify "for purposes of discussion" with characters whose life situations may be different from their own. They can gain a new perspective on problems about which their own immediate responses may have hardened.

Humanist in residence programs have much more latitude for prior assignment of actual written texts as background for discussion. Philosophers' lunches, study groups, book discussion groups, film, television, and drama programs provide participants with a shared text which also gives them a concrete referent for tracking the humanities scholars' thoughts, and a shared vocabulary for developing and expressing their own.

The fact that such texts usually present individual experiences enables the discussants to see, even in discussions of public policy, how generalizations come from and influence individual human lives. They also cause the participants to see their own experience in connection with the experience of others, in the text and in the discussion group. Several senior citizens' projects have demonstrated the usefulness of texts to individual participants. For example, the NEH sponsored project "Self-Discovery Through the Humanities" uses reading to stimulate discussion and reminiscence. "Arkansas Autumn" is described by the sponsors as leading to increased sharing of memories and skills.[7]

These examples make it clear that one important use of the humanities is to enrich the life of the individual participant by giving her texts which enable her to see life in a more complex way, more integrated with other individual human experiences. Jacob Neusner says that the humanities enable us to "construct bridges and analogies, paths of meaning from the thing we study to ourselves."[8] An individual's intellectual experience is part of her emotional and psychological state.

III

When I began thinking through the subject of this paper, I asked myself when my own training as a humanities scholar has been most useful to me. The incident that repeatedly surfaced in my mind in response to this question was a highly personal one.

A few years ago I went through a very serious family crisis , connected with the discovery that my adolescent daughter suffers from a degenerative neurological condition. During this period I made many trips by car to doctors and other specialists in connection with her disease.

One day during one of these drives, I realized that each time I got to the car to make such a trip, my mind, which was preoccupied with practical details when I was not driving, immediately began reciting poetry – poetry that I had memorized twenty years earlier when I was a college student.[9]

> Margaret, are you grieving
> Over Goldengrove unleaving?
> Leaves, like the things of man, you
> With your fresh thoughts care for, can you?

Once I recognized what the poem was that I was reciting, I understood suddenly something that armies of consultants had not got across to me (although some of them had tried) – that I was suffering from grief. And because the recognition came to me this way, I had the rich resources of English poetry to help me come to terms, emotionally as well as intellectually, with my grief.

As human beings we are not, after all, dichotomized into an intellectual component (which thinks like a humanist) and an emotional one (which doesn't think). Rather, we intellectualize emotional experience and emotionally experience that which we think about. Hopkins' poem says:

> Ah, as the heart grows older
> You will come to such sights colder,
> By and by, nor spare a sigh
> Though worlds of wanwood leafmeal lie;
> And yet you *will* weep, and know why.

Because my personal revelation came from Hopkins, I had access through it to a great range of responses to grief. The poetry that had been filling my mind during those drives was grief poetry. I did not *comfort* me; it made me integrate my emotional and my intellectual experience of grief.

> It is the blight man was born for,
> It is Margaret you mourn for.

I had filled my young mind with poems about grief years before I experienced it, thinking about literary history, aesthetics, theology; the poetry *and the analysis of the poetry* were available to me when my need was more emotional.

My mind, because of my training as a humanities scholar, is full of metaphors against which I can test my own experience. Robert Detweiller has suggested that hermeneutics, the science of interpretation, is the proper sphere of the humanities, and that the phenomenon of metaphor is an explanation of how human beings are able to understand.[10] Detweiller suggests that an excessive emphasis on heroic and tragic metaphors has limited both our understanding and the behavior of which we are capable, that we need comic metaphors to match the complexity of our experience. Gregory Stevens, responding to Detweiller, asserts that not metaphor, but dialectic is needed.[11] Again, I suggest that these dichotomies (tragic/comic, metaphor/dialectic) oversimplify the mental process of humanities scholarship which seeks through individual fragmentary experience a vision of the whole human condition. As Alan Shusterman observes in his essay on the place of literature in humanities programs, "literature can be made to stand in opposition to the frightening separateness of so many lives, even if the subject of the literature is that very isolation."[12]

I have been saying that one *use* of the humanities is a highly personal one: courage for a senior citizen, from reading about and discussing another person's experience of age; psychological support for a grieving parent through the recognition of a rich literature of grief. Edwin J. Delattre has stated that the "intended result" of studying the humanities is that the individual "should be better able to understand, design, build, or repair a life."[13]

Much has been said about the humanities as a private activity, destined to be pursued by individual scholars alone with individual books in the study, the library, or under a tree, but that metaphor, I think, is profoundly untrue to the way most of us learned to be humanists.

Nikki Giovanni has a poem that describes very well one of my own characteristic ways of learning about literature:

> the last time I was home
> to see my mother we kissed
> exchanged pleasantries pulled a warm
> comforting silence around
> us and read separate books.[14]

I have spent my share of time alone with books, but I have learned the complexity of the humanities in interaction with other people – following someone else's train of thought and building on it, relating as a reader to the writer of a text, discussing manuscripts with friends and teachers and students, talking, listening, thinking as a member of groups, and sometimes, in a warm and comforting silence, reading separate books.

One *use* of the humanities is individual. My reflections on Hopkins and Arnold and Dylan Thomas and Adrienne Rich and Robin Morgan saw me through a time of grief – and as for

products, I have a good list of poetry to be read at my funeral! But the *study* from which this moment came was not individual. Having learned to make connections between other people's experience, I practiced that skill and connected their experience with my own.

Charles Frankel said that the result of teaching the humanities is "immediate: it is the difference in people's experience if they know the background of what is happening to them, if they can place what they are doing in a deeper and broader context, if they have the metaphors and symbols that can give their experience a shape."[15]

So our programs that encourage people to think, and give them metaphors to do it in may lead to individual growth or even just survival and that is being useful. Seeing local history may give an audience member insight into her own roots, to her place in relation to other ethnic groups or other regions. A program of poetry about grief may help someone else's grieving.

Moreover, the relationship of individual to text is one key to the process and forming such relationships requires more time, more depth than a quick dose of poetry. Although Frankel describes this result as "immediate," I think it is not. I had to memorize "Spring and Fall" in order to use it twenty years later; I had to know some theology and some history and some other poetry to understand how it relates and does not relate to my own experience. For this reason, I think the humanities programs most likely to contribute to such experiences for their participants are the various humanist in residence projects. The condition of residency provides time for acquaintance, for depth of discussion, for the use of texts – a deep enough interaction among the humanities scholar(s) and other participants to initiate them into a process, a way of thinking, and to provide information which can deepen understanding.

IV

Humanist in Residence projects have placed academic scholars in a wide variety of locations: prisons, nursing homes, corporations, historical societies, radio stations, theater groups, mental institutions, police cars, communities, hospitals, and agencies of state and municipal government. Some of these, notably the radio stations, theater groups, and scattered communities, have used the humanists primarily as planners of public programs. Others, especially the historical societies, and some communities, have called on the scholars to teach them specific skills: oral history interviewing, techniques for developing and managing archives, how to do research, and so on. At least one corporation pressed the scholar into doing public relations work. The other assignments were more individual and more clearly designed to enable the humanities scholars to follow Shusterman's advice that they "look for ways to conduct *sustained* public teaching," not just single presentations.

Fraser Snowden, for example, who served as philosopher in residence at the Natchitoches (La.) Parish Hospital, defined the goal of his residency as cultivating a deeper recognition of the uniquely human needs of patients through philosophical analysis and reflection. He did this through in-service presentations, individual consultations, and direct work with patients. The project, a response to the recognition that the "health care system largely ignores the emotional, moral, mental, sociocultural, and spiritual needs of patients," was, Snowden reports, for at least some of the individuals involved, pyschotherapeutic, permitting a clarification or alteration of the belief system.[16] James Harrod, humanist in residence in the State of Maine Department of Mental Health and Corrections, had a mandate to review departmental policies in view of their effect on the values of families. Joan Holtzman, philosopher in residence in the Bellevue Hospital Prison Ward in New York, worked with staff members to identify and examine ethical problems in prison psychiatry. She did not, she emphasizes, teach ethics, but worked to raise consciousness about policy and the decision-making process. Donald Bell and Judd Kahn, historians in residence in the Connecticut Office of Policy and Management and the Hartford Assistant City Manager's Office respectively, tried to provide historical perspective and raise longer term questions than policy planners were able to do.[17]

The nature of these assignments suggests the importance of the extended time span and the habit of daily interaction to the accomplishment of project goals. Where the intention is to encourage a pattern of thought, trust and continous interaction are essential. Snowden's blend of in-service training and individual consultation enabled him to introduce the "texts" which could then become the background for discourse.

It is possible, of course, for daily contact to convert the humanities scholar to the values of the business or agency in which he works. Jonathon Walters has reported that a study of corporate hiring shows that even when executives state that they want to hire

humanities graduates, it is because they see the person as a "trainable intellect" and not because of a high evaluation of the humanities background.[18] And Henry Clark in his essay "Humanists in Public Policy: A Case Study in California" describes a small work group in which the humanities were not addressed after the first, background sessions, because a norm was established that was biased toward "practicality" and maintenance of the status quo.[19]

Because the fear of such cooptation is realistic, the designers of the Mellon Fellowships, which place historians and philosophers in Congress, require fellows to meet regularly with each other for discussion of the philosophical implications of their work. The group meetings assure a grounding in the humanities for people otherwise surrounded by others with a more pragmatic orientation. The use of group discussion for this purpose confirms the high value on discourse which has always characterized the humanities.

V

This effort to help humanities scholars suggests another important use of public humanities programs: to educate the humanists themselves. Contrary to the elitist notion that the scholar, through possession of a humanistic tradition handed down from a high cultural past can by his public discourse elevate the standards and values of the out-of-school audience, we have repeatedly found that scholars who engage openmindedly in public programs learn much about themselves as human beings and about the humanities disciplines. Discussion with thoughtful people from different backgrounds often encourages reevaluation of our own ideas. When these discussions extend over time in a challenging work environment as they do in humanist residencies, the individual's mind should stretch accordingly. Even a short humanities presentation, approached thoughtfully, encourages the scholar to perceive the deep connection between town and gown in herself and to reeducate herself about the nature of the humanities as analysis of the crucial conditions of the human condition as it is lived by human beings every day in ordinary circumstance. We learn from the experience valuable things about the nature of the humanities and we do this by exercising the humanities on the issues and difficulties of everyday life.

The scholar then returns to the classroom with new ideas about the social vitality of the subject she teaches. She brings the world into the classroom as well as the humanities into the world.

In my academic program we are conducting a project in which utility is the highest stated goal. Students in Women's Studies classes are engaged in research which will be immediately useful to a community agency. The agency determines the subjects of their research. Two of these subjects call for a humanities perspective; their products will almost certainly be very different from the other information the agency has requested. One is a history of the agency, a Women's Resource Center, and the other is an analysis of the effect of feminist philosophy on the organization of women's centers. To meet these expressed needs of the agency, we will have to work through their implications in sustained discussion with staff members and others, and to produce written reports susceptible to the kind of qualitative analysis that characterizes humanities criticism.

If we assigned the historical research for this project to journalism students, we could produce a brochure for public relations purposes; if we assign it to historians who can uncover for the Center staff and Board information about their collective identity and values, we can hope to engage them in a humanities discussion, to influence and develop their thinking. How useful. How shall we evaluate it? The p.r. brochure will certainly be easier to count and to disseminate.

It is obvious from what I have said here that I think it is useful to "think like a humanist." The problem, as anyone who has worked in public humanities programs must know, is how to evaluate such utility. Since learning to think like a humanist is a process, usually without a product, we cannot measure it in the number of sessions chaired or the number of people in the audience. The cost per person will be difficult to calculate, especially when the process takes place over time.

I suggest that the only way to evaluate this is the same way we usually evaluate quality in the humanities outside the area of public programming: by examining texts.

When I started writing this paper, I had reservations about humanist in residence programs. I like the measurable product from discrete public programs: seminars, workshops, lecture-discussions. What changed my mind was reading about these programs as the residents described them, discussing these texts with colleagues in the state programs, and integrating these vicarious experiences with what I already knew about humanities programming in general. A critical ingredient in the process was my parallel reading on the

nature of the humanities disciplines. This is how the process of humanities thinking usually takes place, and therefore I believe a key element in our ability to evaluate the utility of "applied humanities" will be the encouragement of writing.

Just as texts are essential to initiating humanistic thought, texts are also an essential product of that thought. We have not often encouraged publication in the state programs, and therefore we have seldom encouraged writing (except of course for the writing of voluminous reports and proposals). But evaluation of a process requires texts to be evaluated : essays, journals, tapes, letters and perhaps even scholarly articles.

To apply a process, to apply thoughtful discussion of significant ideas, is what the humanities is about. If we take utility as a value we must exercise great care so that we don't exclude extended discourse in favor of more readily quantifiable skills replication and performance. We can apply "utility" as a standard of value only if our process evaluation respects intellect, respects thought, respects the complexity of culture and the necessity for time and for text.

NOTES

[1]Mary Daly, *Gyn-Ecology, The Metaethics of Radical Feminism*, Boston, Beacon Press, (1978), p. 201.

[2]Richard Hofstadter, *Anti-Intellectualism in American Life*, N.Y., Alfred A. Knopf (1963).

[3]William Poe, "Mellon Fellows in Congress Apply History and Philosophy to Legislation," *Humanities Report*, III, 6 (June 1981), pp. 8-11.

[4]"Humanities Scholars in Residence," *Humanities News*, Connecticut Council, (September 1980), pp.4-5,8.

[5]"Announcing A New Journal in the Humanities," Center for Humanities, University of Southern California, n.d.

[6]R. Oakley Winters, "Supply-Side Humanities: Reflections on Engaging Business Executives in Public Programs," *Federation Reports* IV, 4 (July/August 1981), pp. 1-4.

[7]See *Federation Reports*, IV, 2 (March/April 1981).

[8]Jacob Neusner, "From Many, One? Defining the Humanities for Public Use," *Federation Reports*, III, 7 (April 1980), p. 30.

[9]Gerard Manley Hopkins, "Spring and Fall."

[10]Robert Detweiller, "The Humanities and Values: Advocacy or Process?" *Humanities in the South* 51 (Spring 1980), pp.1-6.

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The Humanities and the State Councils: Retooling in the 1980s

by Abraham Edel

At a time of crisis such as the present, we have to look to the basic aims of our program, how they worked out in practice, the rationale for our continued efforts, and perhaps most of all to see in principle and by example what the possible contributions of our program are and can be to the ongoing development of American life and its traditions. Part I of this paper therefore deals with our beginning, our promise, and the context of needs and values to which the program was addressed. Part II suggests some lines of self-assessment: the work of the councils, the reaction of the grass roots, the problems of the humanists. Part III deals with hesitations, external attacks, and inner doubts: how we may get beyond the recurrent elitist-populist controversy, how to understand and respond to the fuss over "secular humanism" and the humanities, whether the humanities can really be "practical."

I

First, then, about ourselves. We have had so many projects on oral history that it should not be difficult to marshall self-consciousness. We are now a sturdy more-than-ten-year-old. When we were three our parents met in conference, much as we do today, but in as yet unfederated form, and they talked of their hopes and fears. On that occasion, Ronald Berman, then Chairman of the NEH, said of the state councils effort:

> Of all the areas in the public program, in all their variety, responding as they do to many different needs and many different kinds of programs, none, and probably no activity of the Endowment, is as arduous, as fundamental, and perhaps as risky as the task we have asked you to realize. . . .
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> It is arduous because you are creating an approach to the general public, and doing it in a novel structure and form. It is fundamental, because those who are interested in the humanities must demonstrate that they can do more than profess an article of faith. The state councils, therefore, bear the burden of reintroducing the humanities into American life at the most immediate level – at the level of the individual adult citizen . . . .
>
> It is also risky. Most arduous and fundamental things are: the program may lose its present high quality, it may lose its focus on the humanities, and it may lose its objectivity and therefore its public acceptance.

And so he called on us to make tough judgments of quality, to keep a clear eye on the centrality of the humanities, to engage in dispassionate discussion.

There is much that we now know about our program and its achievements. Most important, we know that we are grown up, that we have worked out patterns of a relatively independent life so that, whatever the present crisis brings, we will endure. The scope of our work may suffer, and we may have to face certain temptations and resist them if the financial cuts are too great. For example, if we have to depend more on private contributions, it is conceivable that some contributors may want advertising or strings on the kind of projects involved; we will have to make some of those tough judgments of quality.

We do not have to recapitulate today what we all know about the founding of NEH in 1965, the beginning of the state councils in 1970, what our structure became and how it was reshaped in 1976, the prescriptions that ensured our conformity to legal intent and accountability, what different experiments were tried with techniques of organization in many state councils, even what variety of projects by now finds a place in our annals, and what has been our outreach. We are told that there have been 26,000 projects, 10 million active participants, 200 million people reached through print and electronic media, and over 30,000 scholars involved in projects and councils. Such a factual picture is available in the reports of NEH and of our Federation. *Federation Reports* and the work of its Board of Directors are increasingly sophisticated in using comparative experience and in analyzing techniques. (For the latter, see for example the "First Report of the Federation Study Group on Alternatives," in which the advantages and disadvantages of every technique from council-initiated projects to Resource Centers are carefully and subtly weighed.) We may take great satisfaction in our accomplishments, and doubtless this Conference will advance fresh lines of effort. But what now concerns us is to clarify our basic thrust, its animating spirit. We know the general charge: to foster public understanding and appreciation of the humanities. But why, to what ends, with what expectations, under what pressures of social or spiritual needs, were governmental resources devoted to such enterprises?

Such an inquiry is usually formulated in terms of needs, problems, values. Concepts of this sort are interconnected: values also satisfy needs and help solve problems; behind needs lie values which make some things necessary; problems are essentially difficulties in satisfying

conflicting needs or achieving conflicting values in specific contexts. In practice these are always complexly related. We are constantly surprised by the values that emerge as we deal with needs and problems and the needs that are furthered and the problems that are generated as we pursue known values. Only a conceptual tyranny will insist that we choose between whether the humanities are intrinsically valuable or their pursuit instrumental to allegedly external ends. Whole chapters in the history of philosophy and psychology show how we can be needlessly sidetracked by such dichotomies.

Looking back, then, it is easy to say that after World War II, in a time of rapid economic and technological expansion, when science had already acquired its post-Sputnik momentum and social science was the focus of heavy investment, when higher education was expanding for the first time to include a large proportion of our youth, it was perfectly natural that culture and the arts should have their turn. It did not matter that some saw it as the embellishment of a mature civilization, others as spiritual fuel for progress and a moral sharpening of social direction. After all, did not the great renaissance of ancient Athens come in a century that followed a successful war of defense against external danger, and the establishment of an empire that brought wheat and drachmas and aspiring intellectuals to the port of Piraeus? Joseph Duffey, former Chairman of NEH, looking back fifteen years after its founding, reminds us (*Humanities*, December 1980) that the report of a Commission preceding the founding declared that our "national ethic and morality or the lack of it, the national aesthetic and beauty or lack of it, the national use of our environment and our material accomplishments" depended upon the humanities. And Duffey adds that the argument for the Endowment is essentially a conservative call for the preservation of something of uncontested value.

When we move to the founding of the state councils in 1970, the situation is markedly changed. Now the aspect of problems and pressing needs stands out more clearly, and it becomes even more so as we go on into the seventies. I need scarcely remind you of the revolt of the youth in the sixties, the conflicts over the Vietnam War, the successive liberation movements, the turbulence in the cities, the shock of the Watergate episode. Disillusionment, loss of faith in our institutions, alienation, are the terms so often used to characterize this period. Is it in any way surprising that the initial focus of the state program was on bringing the humanities to the clarification of policy decisions? Where but to the humanities could we have gone at that time? The sciences had long boasted of their neutrality and the social sciences had aped the natural sciences. Of course we were seeking the roots of our American tradition, but how were we to understand that tradition itself? The charge to our program, while thoroughly humanistic, was at the same time thoroughly practical.

We have to look even deeper. It is necessary because we find so often the tendency to dismiss the struggles and disillusionment of the sixties and seventies as if they were brief illnesses in our body politic and our collective mentality, like measles that in the old days a child had to go through and could then forget, or the occasionally disturbing common cold. How often is it said that it is time to get over the "Vietnam War syndrome." But in fact the turmoil of the sixties and seventies is only a small part of the vast changes and problems of our century. We gain a deeper understanding when we look at the last fifty years as a period of practical critique in which traditional institutions and practices, once fixed forms of society, have either been largely abandoned or else so transformed as to be scarcely recognizable. In every case, however, they have left a mass of problems to be faced. Consider the demise of colonialism, once a proud system of empire, and the present problems of the Third World; the practical demise of laissez-faire, whether by state or corporate control, and the problems of a social safety-net; the loss of faith in business and in labor, and for that matter, in government and politics. The transformation of standards about sex and the family are almost paradigmatic: it is hard to imagine that only a short time ago divorce was a social disgrace and contraception was illegal; now polls show that 70% of our population, especially those with children under 17, are in favor of sex education in the schools. The succession of liberation movements has uncovered the depths of our discrimination and indifference and shaken faith in our integrity; and yet we now waver between our sense of justice and the cost of remedying our own past practices. We have lost our older confidence in the professions – the doctor, the lawyer, the psychiatrist, the journalist, the teacher – and to handle the resulting problems we tinker with codes of ethics and file malpractice suits. The list is infinitely long, but perhaps the depth of the critique is best shown by the fact that no institution was left standing on which to pivot reconstruction. One might have expected that

education and technology would remain as the promise of progress. But higher education itself was a central object of attack in the 1960s; we need not rehearse the charges against it of processing students for the military-industrial complex. And technology was irretrievably associated with the underlying threat of nuclear war, with pollution, and the social sciences with the manipulation of people; the critique of science and technology in the first Club of Rome report in the early 1970s even set a timetable for ultimate disaster.

Disillusionment extended beyond institutions and practices to social philosophies and traditional ideals. This is a more complex story, but one element certainly has been that, as Nietzsche put it long ago, we have looked into the factory where ideals are manufactured. Our media have carried us behind the scenes in the grooming of candidates, the casting of images, and the techniques of Madison Avenue in the making of ideologies. Thus now, when for example George Gilder writes that business investment is carrying out the biblical injunction to cast your bread upon the waters, without a guarantee but only a hope of return, it sounds more like *Mad Magazine* than a serious analysis of economic ideals. Yet a full analysis of our reactions should not stop with the negative critiques alone. New conceptions and alternative ideals were voiced in the process of critique itself: love as against meritocracy; a new sense of personal autonomy and responsibility; a striving for participation and community rather than authority and obedience; an enlarged conception of human rights.

Whatever the balance of optimism and pessimism, of hope and despair, it is enough to recognize that the America of 1965 and 1970, as indeed the America of the 1980s, was participating in a revolutionary period of history that called and still calls for thorough and pervasive reconstruction. In these respects our century is comparable to the seventeenth century with its revision of science and political forms, and to the late eighteenth century with its industrial, political, and intellectual revolutions. This is the deeper context of the Endowment's state program initiative of 1970 – an America challenged and perplexed, yet confident enough still to face its growing problems, and intelligent enough to want the best of traditional thought brought to bear on its needs. how else shall we interpret the statutory mandate in the Endowment's legislative charter that "particular attention" be given to "the relevance of the humanities to the current conditions of national life"? And note too the characterization of the quest: arduous, fundamental, objective, full of risk. It was not a quest for answers, for objectivity means the facing of alternatives. It was a request for clarification and understanding of issues and the values of the American tradition and the human situation. As the Endowment later expressed its assumptions: "The national life is impoverished and the quality of life is endangered by the lack of continuing intercourse between scholars in the humanities and the public on matters of long-term concern." Perhaps too, as the Bicentennial came into sight, there was a nostalgia for the way in which culture and philosophy and the growing sciences once played an immediate part in the fashioning of a new policy.

II

We look now at the strengths and weaknesses of our past, in the effort to continue and expand the one and to improve the other. Let us take in turn the operations of: 1) the councils, 2) the grass roots, particularly in generating projects, 3) the humanists.

1) The state councils got their bearings early. They already had the all-human perspective of national needs. Their urgent focus now was on the states – state consciousness, state geography and demography, state interests, and problems. Rhode Island, taking as much pride in being the smallest state as Texas did in being the largest, analyzed its ethnic population and raised immediate questions of their interrelation. Arizona, similarly mapping its state geographically and ethnically, devoted special attention to its large Native American population. Pennsylvania, finding its projects coming from established urban centers, turned to rural-urban relations and devised special techniques to stimulate and encourage rural areas. Minnesota made regionalism a topic of inquiry. Montana was led to the problem of political power. In one way or another, taking hold wherever projects could really get under way, the councils bit by bit expanded their scope and moved into higher gear.

The councils were quickly faced with a wide range of tasks: to separate projects that would give expression to basic intent from such as would not; to work out criteria of evaluation for projects that were carried through; to learn about the impact of techniques on purposes; to maintain democratic responsibility. In each of these, lessons of experience stand out clearly.

In determining acceptibility, the councils had to differentiate projects that merely continued

schooling from those that treated policy problems; projects attached to an historical event (such as the Holocaust) that might be merely commemorative from those that were probing lessons for contemporary attitudes; projects that proclaimed the virtues of a particular religion from those that carried human lessons about religion facing the modern world; projects that called for subsidizing works of art or dramatic production from those that dwelt with the impact of art and its criteria. (In this last case, cooperation was eventually worked out with arts councils.)

Criteria of evaluation were sharpened as particular projects were evaluated. Good attendance was not enough; it depended on the way the audience was affected. Audience participation was not enough; it depended on whether the discussion was pointed or just meandering. Even feeling good as a result was not enough; that might come from simply being entertained. And of course just an audience questionnaire was not enough; it depended on what was asked as well as what was answered.

Councils, in considering projects, had to dip into detail for the impact of techniques; the general merit of a proposal was not enough. Take, for example, two projects submitted on the same theme of ethnic discrimination in television. One sorted and presented its material by ethnic groups, and on separate occasions; the other put its data together for comparative anaysis. The likelihood was the the lesson of the first would be to teach each group separately, that *it* was the object of discrimination; the lesson of the second would pose the common problem of stereotyping and insensitivity to ethnic feeling. We might almost out-McLuhan McLuhan here – not just the medium but the technique shaped the message.

Councils have, on the whole, felt their democratic responsibilities. For the most part they kept full responsibility for decision making as a whole, even though the multiplication of proposals forced some division of labor. They have rarely allowed the administrative apparatus to do such jobs as would limit or predetermine their decisions. They have been careful not to narrow the confines of proposals even when it was the custom to select a state theme, and they responded with cautious experimentation to the changes that were made in 1976 when the policy focus was diminished and greater variety became possible.

On the whole, commentators on the calibre of our state councils have commended the tradition of excellence and devotion. We need not, then, go on with this, sweet as may be the music of congratulations.

2) Perhaps congratulations should go even more to the grass roots from which our projects came. Putting aside the small group that bore the mark of professional grantsmanship, the vast majority came forward with projects and problems of appropriate common concern. And while many were rough-hewn, many were finetuned to the limits of practical decision and to basic values. It is impossible briefly to characterize the scope and variety of the projects. Of course there were innumerable approaches to issues of ethnicity. Of course numerous studies enriched the self-esteem of groups and communities, assisted by historians who taught the techniques of oral history. Of course in the surge of the women's liberation movement all kinds of familial and interpersonal concerns found expression. Let me not continue a recital that properly would require not mere topics but the significance of what was approached, why at that particular time, and what clarification of alternatives was secured. I venture the hypothesis that a collective democratic wisdom was really shown at the grass roots in the perception of what troubles us today. It did not aim necessarily at solutions, but at discovering paths and alternatives, considering arguments and amassing lessons of experience and humanistic insights. Take as an example the large assortment of ethnicity projects. Think of projects on the reception of different Asian groups at a time when refugees were entering the country and being settled in old and established communities, projects that even in the simplest terms brought different groups living side by side to meet one another, to see the cultural riches on both sides. Think of the lessons of the Holocaust projects at a time when the Ku Klux Klan is attempting to expand by setting interest against interest. Think in general of the many projects that have brought to traditional minorities the sense of their own cultural contribution to the mainstream, the lesson that to have joined American life need not entail an abandonment, that hyphenated Americans are not less integrated Americans, that all Americans except the American Indians are essentially newcomers following a promise, with only a difference in time.

The ethnicity projects are also a good example of the way learning could take place over time, not necessarily in solving problems but in revealing the deeper issues that have to be faced. The earlier ethnicity projects had as their outcome, whether intentional or not, first the

enhancement of self-esteem in groups that had been the subject of discrimination or indifference; second, the sense of their positive contribution to American life and culture. The later ones begin to come in sight of the question: Where are we going? It is one thing to add a proud coherence to an ethnic group. But what would you do with a proposal that wanted to investigate ways of restoring an urban ethnic enclave and lamented the fact that the young were moving out into the wide community? I suspect you would think immediately of the cities in which ethnic enclaves do exist and ask whether they are a source of cultural riches or of inter-group conflict. In fact, our ethnic projects are increasingly compelled to face the deeper meaning of an integrated community, once the old and roughshod ideal of wholesale assimilation has been trimmed of its arrogance; we have to face the precise meaning of pluralism and whether it may contain a disintegrating potential. The issue of bilingual education has perhaps brought it to its sharpest focus; whether such a policy is providing an appropriate, even urgent, service during a period in which the student is learning English, and whether teaching history and mathematics in other languages can be used to accelerate the learning of English, or whether the door is rather being opened to the establishment of permanent linguistic enclaves that will thereby be shut off from one another. At that point we have to reckon with the lessons of French Canada and of Belgium. It will not be enough to say, correctly no doubt, that an exploited minority becomes an over-reacting minority, and we can remedy this by a fixed policy of equality and freedom. For even with freedom one has to decide which way to go. The United States, which has been moving backwards on questions of language teaching in the schools, has not opted for the happy multilingual solution of small countries like Holland and Denmark. What then lies in the ideal of cultural pluralism that has so often been offered in opposition to an assimilation that submerges the old culture? Or what intermediate ideals may be elaborated?

These are the deeper questions which the most recent of our ethnicity projects may help us ask and face. Indeed, such questioning may be related to the long-standing issue of deliberate communal experimentation in partial isolation. The early history of Mormonism in the United States was such an experiment. Similar experiments have been found among American Indians. For example, the Mesquakie, in the mid-West, disapproving of the competitive-aggressive quality of American life, bought their own land and organized their own community but for the most part remained employed in the larger society. Such social separation may be more frequent in an unstructured way than we think. America is, to speak tritely, a large and varied and complexly differentiated society. We are moving into the area of problems of social and humanistic policy, of where to build bridges and where to cut bridges, and the costs to the people involved.

There are many other fascinating types of projects – concerning business, labor, women, drama, poetry – that could lead us on and on. Let me mention simply two that somehow linger in my mind as showing the creative spirit at the grass roots. A one-industry town lost its one industry and found no aid from business or government. What could it do? It could assemble people of experience in business and economics and, in its troubled spirit, humanist scholars to deliberate on its plight. Did that furnish a happy ending? Not so far as I know. But it brought greater unity to the community and turned it from depair to collective effort. Santayana's picture of spontaneous prayer well captures the point: we only pray where there is nothing else we can do to alleviate the trouble. Our prayers explain to the deity the detail of our plight and the need for help – despite the belief that God knows everything. In this one-way dialogue, the spirit grows even if the issue is not resolved, and as we clarify our broader purposes we rededicate our efforts.

The second project I have in mind is remarkable in the sheer fact that people thought of doing it. Here is a coal-mining town that was long idle and suddenly there is , thanks to the oil crisis, a move toward a new prosperity. Would you expect one to look the gift of prosperity in the mouth? They did. They organized a reflective project, with fine representation of the scientific and philosophic and historical, to see what prosperity coming in this way would mean to their community. Would it be simply a cycle of boom and bust, leaving them with a disintegrated community, a disrupted nature, and an array of fresh problems? How could that be avoided and yet the gift of prosperity accepted? What was worth doing, what not?

3) From the activity of the state councils and the creativity of the grass roots, we turn thirdly to the functioning of the humanists. If in the other two I stress our strengths, here I want to focus on our shortcomings. The record of project evaluations shows how often a successful humanist presentation stimulates and brings novel elements to discussion. I ask why this does

not happen more as a rule than as a gratifying surprise. The answer goes to the heart of the humanities and their mode of operation.

I am not saying that humanists have not done a good job, but that we have made it harder for them to do such a job. For we stereotype them, we want to set them off as a group distinct from any other intellectual group, and we do this by a simplified and wholesale description. For example, if we have a symposium on Three Mile Island, the physicists are there to give us the facts, the economists to present a cost-benefit analysis, and then we call on the assembled humanists, whatever their special discipline, and say, "Now tell us about the fundamental values involved." Or we say,"We now have the quantitative reckoning; how about the qualitative judgments?" Or one more: "Well, folks, that's the picture. Now how do we *feel* about it?"

You recognize the string of dichotomies -- fact-value, objective-subjective, quantitative-qualitative, knowledge-feeling (or appreciation) -- and could summon up a host of others, by which the humanities have been cut off from other intellectual enterprises and locked into a limiting role. Most of these dichotomies have been challenged as our knowledge grew and our philosophic thought became more refined. They reflected stages in the development of the different disciplines at different periods of human thought. In the seventeenth century the disciplines were still close together; Newton was a natural philosopher. In the eighteenth century, when the social sciences got seriously under way in the economics of Adam Smith, the humanistic disciplines were not set off separately; they all fell under what was called the "moral sciences." Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations* dealt with economic man and his *Theory of the Moral Sentiments* with moral man; the different human phenomena were self-interest and sympathy, and both could be studied in the picture of human nature, to provide which was the work of psychology. In the nineteenth century, by Darwin's time, physics and biology, as long established sciences, were ranged opposite classics, entrenched as the humanistic and evaluative study of the ideals of life. (Even here Greek had had to struggle against entrenched Latin to be admitted.) T.H. Huxley in the later part of the nineteenth century had to argue for the admission of science into education, and he did it on the claim that science can convey life's ideals as well as classics, apart from being also practical. By the twentieth century, the physical and natural sciences, separately ensconced, became louder in voicing their value neutrality; the social sciences as they grew tried to imitate the physical sciences; and the miscellany of disciplines outside both got roughly identified as humanities. All three areas are by this time rich, varied, and complex. I think it should be clear that none of them, whatever the historical reasons for which each has contracted its self-image, really fit the narrowed descriptions imposed upon them. Whatever principle may be suggested as differentiating the sciences and the humanities, we can find sciences and humanities that share it, and sciences and humanities that lack it. A full examination of this situation, with ample illustration, would, I think, make clear that there is continuity in all human inquiry: imagination, values and purposes, formal technicality and measurement and evidence, responsible tracing of relations, general ideas and particular descriptions, and all the rest, belong to all inquiry. There is, of course, division of labor and difference of emphasis in various contexts, but we must not be misled by these into selling short fundamental unities.

Such reflections may help us in correcting what I have suggested to be the chief weakness in program development, namely treating the humanities wholesale. We need to work on the possible contributions of the different disciplines that make up the humanities. This should be done in the formative stage of projects, and attuned more directly to their specific needs. Where there is ethnocentrism, anthropology may enlighten. Where there is dogmatism, comparative religion may be a solvent. Where there is over-intellectualism, poetry can restore the balance of feeling. Where people are lost in detail, drama furnishes a plot or architecture teaches structure. Where words stumble and response becomes inarticulate -- where "you know" replaces the comma – literature brings fresh resources. Where we are mired in the present, history liberates us. And since most projects are complex, a selection of a number of the humanities will be most appropriate, but to make a variety of contributions, not just to do the same job.

If this, as I see it, has been our central weakness, it is one that lies wholly within our power to correct. In this respect we are fortunate in its location.

III

We now turn to the debates about the nature of our program, the external attacks upon it, and the inner doubts and hesitations: 1) the view that we are populist but should be elitist; 2) the

attack that we are spreading "secular humanism"; 3) the doubt whether we can really be "practical."

1) If any of us thought that the elitist-populist debate concerning our program belonged to the early Carter days, we were disillusioned by the remarks (recently heard on radio) of a professor who was then a leading candidate for the chairmanship of NEH. He said that he would not spend money on populism, that the purpose was not to serve the populace nor the humanists but the humanities. While he might have popular programs spreading the humanities (like TV presentation of the Adamses), he would not give money to labor unions to explore their past or money to discuss the Carter energy policy, and so forth. In the earlier public debates about populism we were charged with bringing a diluted culture to the masses and it was even contended that culture is intrinsically elitist. In the most practical terms, it was argued, where resources are scarce, they should be apportioned to established centers and known researchers and artists.

The tumult over elitism and populism in connection with our program seems to miss the point. The serious issues of policy in the allocation of resources are not clarified by saying that we have to choose between these alternatives.

Elitism in a democracy sounds innocent enough. It is the natural outcome of meritocracy. You leave an open door and the best will walk through. Such meritocracy pervades all fields. The elite are the achievers, the stars in athletics and acting, in music and book-writing, in journalism and politics. Even chess has its innings. But though it sounds innocent, elitism retains the basic aristocratic belief that excellence is limited to the few; the many, marked by incapacity, have little sense of excellence, they long for charismatic leaders and share vicariously in the achievement of their betters. Accordingly, the elitist society directs its resources to the top and elitism thus becomes a self-fulfilling prophesy. Its actual practice curbs opportunity, accepts the manipulation of people, and turns the *de facto* denial of opportunity into the arrogant assumption of inevitable superiority of a few. It becomes too easy then to survey the present scene, as the historian Barbara Tuchman did in an article in *The New York Times Magazine* one Sunday this past year, and deprecate the sleazy in production, the absence of quality in "fast foods and junky clothes and cute greeting cards. . .in endless paperbacks of sex and slaughter, Gothics and westerns" and ask "whether popular appeal will become the governing criterion and gradually submerge all but isolated rocks of quality."

I call this the easy path, because its usual procedure is to give a kaleidoscopic view of lack of quality and jump to an attack on egalitarianism and populism. Influences are not examined: why quality control is ignored in one society and made central in another; the impact of competition for profits on sleaziness; the pressure of advertising, and so on. In fact, a sense of excellence is widespread in many areas: for example, our youth appreciates quality and the discipline that goes into it when they are concerned with sport or with dancing. The issue may then be fields in which it is exercised. Again, it is easy, in assuming basic incapacity, to condemn our educational system and forget that our century is the first in the history of mankind that has attempted to provide education for the mass of people – usually under the burdens of insufficient support, bureaucratic organization, and still dominant elitist attitudes.

The elitist attitude to the populace in matters of culture is a heritage of the past that forecloses experimentation for the future. Cicero once advised a friend never to get a servant from Britain, for they are barbarians, ever incapable of culture. Elitism thus basically sidetracks the democratic faith without giving it the opportunity for a long-range testing – the faith expressed modestly in Jefferson's last letter. He wrote: "the mass of mankind has not been born with saddles on their backs, nor a favored few booted and spurred, ready to ride them legitimately, by the grace of God." (June 24, 1826) In these words he was echoing a long tradition of democratic demand; earlier, in 1685, the Leveller, Richard Rumbold, had said on the scaffold: "I am sure there was no man born marked of God above another; for none comes into the world with a saddle on his back, neither any booted and spurred to ride him."

Such modest rejection of elitism is not equivalent to populism. Populism is the other face of the coin, the extreme reaction of those who are discriminated against to the doctrines of discrimination. It is the "Black is beautiful" stage in the Black liberation movement. One does not argue with populism any more than one argues about standards of beauty with the Black liberation movement, or whether God is female with the women's movement. One removes the discrimination, renews the Voting Rights Act or passes the Equal Rights Amendment. Then we can look realistically to what is possible at what stage of development.

We get nowhere in policy discussion by asking:

shall we be elitist or shall we be populist? The realistic problem is to secure a full view of the variety of tasks that a society like ours has to undertake if it is to offer genuine support for and secure the maximum benefit from the pursuit of the humanities. Take as a neutral paradigm for such an analysis the case of science. The first task is to support original scientists in their work. A second is to provide opportunities for people to be attracted to science, to experiment and learn their capacities, especially those whose promise would not be reached in the usual ways. A third task – and this is the center of the storm – is to develop an understanding of science in the adult population generally, so that there will be some acquaintance with and appreciation of its work and ways of operating. We know too well the consequences of neglecting this third task: science is regarded as a kind of magic, TV ads parade the scientist in a white coat as a kind of witch doctor, and science is conceived as another kind of dogmatism.

In the case of the humanities, the first task is obviously the support of research, just as the National Endowment for the Arts supports creative art. The second task, to develop that interest in the humanities out of which future humanistic work will come, is presumably carried out by the schools and colleges and universities, as well as other cultural institutions. The third task – to bring about a widespread sense of the humanities and their relevance to human life – is precisely the work of NEH and our program. Its aim is not just to show the humanities to the people, as works in museums used to be shown and books in libraries were made available. (Now both museums and libraries have moved ahead in the attempt to activate the public.) Its aim is to stimulate the active powers, to involve the public and to bring it into active participation.

The problem for which elitism and populism have served as demagogic counters is that of allocating resources among these three functions. On the one hand it is said that only original work counts and on principle it should have priority, for without it there would be nothing to bring to the adult public. On the other, it is pointed out that without public understanding and appreciation creation would suffer from its isolation and it would lack support. The actual direction of policy is far more complex: it depends on the stage of development of the society, the extent to which other institutions are carrying out the tasks in part, the current needs of the society, and a complex of other factors. We have seen in retrospect (in Part I) the crisis that generated our program and, if anything, the underlying needs have intensified since that time. Let me cite one startling indication. You have all doubtless studied the report on the state of the humanities issued last year by the special commission set up by the Rockefeller Foundation. Did you not find it astounding that the report called repeatedly on NEH to stimulate educational initiative in the schools to advance the humanities? Why turn to NEH? Does it mean that we have done such a good job for the adults that we are now asked to do a comparable job for the children? When you consider the vast resources of schools and colleges, taken collectively throughout the country, and the meagre total budget of NEH, that such a request should come in our direction must mean something very positive about our work.

2) We now turn to external attacks. They are not merely accusations that projects are propagating "secular humanism," but in some cases involve overt action. Not limited to a particular part of the country, they have come in Maine, Arizona, Louisiana, and doubtless elsewhere. In one place there is a general condemnation of the humanities, in another objection to the discussion of particular topics, in other contexts general attacks on books and schools, in some attempted legislation (the Arkansas legislature passed last March, but then challenged successfully in the courts, an act which called for teaching creationism as a "scientific alternative" to evolution). In 1980, we are told, 1,200 communities reported pressure for censorship, compared to 300 in 1979. The kind of virulence found may be seen in the Louisiana case, where the idea of a philosopher-in-residence in a hospital was resisted with such intellectual gems as that they would not tolerate an "atheist-communist-existentialist-pragmatist" in the hospital and the charge that it would destroy the religious faith of dying patients. (*Federation Reports* July/August 1981). The literature of assault on secular humanism is, however, much more elaborate than this. An account of the movement in *Newsweek* (July 6, 1981) compares it to the witch-hunts of the 1950s. In comparison to the sweep of these onslaughts, the diatribes on John Dewey and progressive education over the many decades are a model of restraint. The present attacks appear to stretch in their denunciation from the recent "Humanist Manifesto" back to Renaissance humanism (it took early false steps) and even to Thomas Aquinas for reintroducing a humanistic Aristotelianism into western religion. I quote a further choice item from the *Newsweek* story:

"(Anti-humanist) LaHaye excoriates Michelangelo for sculpting a nude David – when the Bible makes it clear in Genesis that, having fallen from grace, man should cover his nakedness. 'The Renaissance obsession with nude "art forms",' LaHaye declares, 'was the forerunner of the modern humanist's demand for pornography in the name of freedom'."

There may be an initial hesitation in entering into controversy on matters of religion in our society. This properly reflects our traditional respect for religious beliefs in a society that made religious freedom a basic tenet. Of course, nonbelief is equally protected, while comparative religion is included among the humanities by Congressional listing. In matters of religion and non-religion we are a pluralistic society.

As to the relation of humanists and religion, it is easy to set the record straight. Since humanists study men's works and interests, there may be different hypotheses about and attitudes toward religion in the outcome of their studies. Some humanists are religious, as were many Renaissance humanists; some are secular. These are not necessarily cut off from one another in contemporary life; for example, a movement like the Ethical Culture Society in the twentieth century is one in which the moral aspect attracts both religious and non-religious humanists. Even among secular humanists there are at least three different views. Some see religion as embodying a dogmatism that stands in the way of human progress; they regard the way the Church treated Galileo in the seventeenth century as the appropriate paradigm for all religious influence. This seems to be the view of the most recent Humanist Manifesto so prominent in the current controversy. A second secularist view, however, sees religion as a socio-cultural form through which people have ordered their lives and articulated their values. Of course there has been dogmatism in religion, but there has been dogmatism also in most human institutions – in medicine, psychiatry, economics, even at points in the history of science. Institutions tend to be like that. From this perspective it is more important to know what kind of a God is worshipped than whether one is religious or not. A third secularist view – I have in mind the Marxian – falls somewhere between the other two. The fragmentary quotation that "religion is the opiate of the people" is misleading, for it is often taken to suggest quietistic uses of religion to disarm the oppressed. The full quotation (in Marx's *Toward the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right)* is quite different: "Religious distress is at once the *expression* of real distress and the *protest* against real distress. Religion is the sigh of the oppressed, the heart of a heartless world, just as it is the spirit of an unspiritual situation. It is the opiate of the people."

Of course such analysis will not stop the attacks. Michael M. Mooney's *The Ministry of Culture* (see Charles Cole's review in *Federation Reports,* March/April 1981) offers the bizarre thesis that the National Federation of State Humanities Councils is a lobby for NEH in its effort to coordinate culture in America and establish the humanities as a secular religion. The argument is apparently having it both ways: secular humanism is irreligious or it is itself a religion, as suits the purposes of a particular contention.

We cannot come to grips with such phenomena without a thorough understanding of what is going on. Let us consider this briefly in two ways: a social analysis of the present context to see what prompts this crude recrudescence, and an historical glance at the intellectual tradition within the philosophy of religion that centers around the response to the growth of secular knowledge.

The historical context of the Moral Majority is the period of revolutionary change in which old ways are broken and adjustment to change is difficult. Over and over again the Moral Majority talks of the breakdown of the family, the drug culture, the increased incidence of crime, pornography, the weakening of responsibility, and so on. Let us frankly recognize that their problems are our problems; not many of the evils by which they are appalled have been undiscussed in our projects throughout the country. What they represent is, however, a far different matter. If their outlook is not the sigh of the oppressed, it is the blind striking out of the depressed. They lack the spirit that has been most characteristic of the American tradition in facing problems – to analyze them and readapt institutions and ways of thought and action to come to grips with them. This is not a liberal prerogative: traditional conservatives too, in clinging to values of the past, at least try to preserve them through a process of reconstructing social life. What we are faced with here, however, is the demand for a wholesale return to an imagined past of blind security.

As for modes of thought, there has always been a regressive approach in the history of religion as well as an approach that reached out to the advance of knowledge. It is clearly seen in the very early question – a very practical one – whether people should run away from plagues, if it is God's will that the plague occur. On the

similar argument that illness is punishment and so should not be treated by doctors; this was countered by the argument that a doctor curing was also God's will. Such arguments are not relics of the past; they are recurring today about genetic engineering as a way of eliminating certain genetic defects, and theologians take opposite sides. The same duality of reaction was found in the rise of science. While Galileo and Copernicus were rejected by the dominant Church of the time, Newtonian science gave an impetus to a religious outlook: God created the world and set up the laws by which it operates; science is thus finding out God's plan in creation. For example, American Puritanism, as seen in the thought of William Ames who was a most influential thinker in seventeenth century Massachusetts, welcomed scientific advance as increased knowledge of God's ways. Both religious and secular scientists continue such a tradition. Immanuel Kant wrote a preface to his scientific treatise, *Universal Natural History and Theory of the Heavens,* in the mid-eighteenth century, explaining why his theory is not deleterious to religion. He was attempting to show, on Newtonian principles, how from the universal diffusion of the primitive matter of all bodies, the evolution of matter to its present form could be explained. This shows the greater, not the lesser glory of God. Many of the nineteenth century formulations of evolutionary theory are in the same spirit. T.H. Huxley, who was an agnostic and in fact coined that term, said (in his Prolegomena to "Evolution and Ethics"): "It is very desirable to remember that evolution is not an explanation of the cosmic process, but merely a generalized statement of the methods and results of that process. And, further, if there is proof that the cosmic process was set going by any agent, then that agent will be the creator of it and of all its products...."

Clearly, science has not been interfering with religion but attending to its own business. The reverse was not, however, always the case. I recall the classic work of Andrew D. White, *A History of the Warfare of Science with Theology in Christendom* (1895). White, an historian, joined with Ezra Cornell in founding Cornell University as a non-sectarian college. As he says in the Introduction, "It required no great acuteness to see that a system of control which, in selecting a Professor of Mathematics or Language or Rhetoric or Physics or Chemistry, asked first and above all to what sect or even to what wing or branch of a sect he belonged, could hardly do much to advance the moral, religious, or intellectual development of mankind." White was amazed by the storm of opposition to the founding of Cornell along such lines. This roused his interest, for he was himself profoundly religious, and prompted his book. The book traces the battle between dogmatic theology and science in discipline after discipline. It is a massive source book by a professional historian. His conclusion that dogmatic theology is the enemy of science embraces also the view that dogmatic theology is the enemy of religion.

If history is repeating itself after an interval of almost a century, it looks as if it has moved, in the familiar saying, from tragedy to farce. For the situation is now quite different. Science is firmly established in the total character of our life and civilization. It is not threatened by the Moral Majority's dogmatism nor by dogmatism as such, since it has built fallibility and corrigibility into its method. The great threat of theological dogmatism is to religion itself. The Moral Majority, in formulating its case as religion *versus* secular humanism, is attempting to speak for all religion, that is, to identify religion as such with its position. I do not think the vast religious movements of America will allow themselves to be thus outwitted. Religion of our time is not exempt from the ferment of our time.

I do not believe that the humanities are in any serious danger either, provided only that they do not yield to fear. Doubtless you will want to discuss how to meet the current attacks, and what should be done in particular contexts. Obviously publication analyzing the issues is called for. In some cases emphasis might fall, as it does in Yale President A. Bartlett Giamatti's speech to the incoming freshmen recently, on the disastrous effects of the Moral Majority's actions – to stamp out independent thought and inquiry would make a mockery of education. In some cases legal action might be appropriate, as in the American Civil Liberties Union's lawsuit against the Arkansas legislation. And so on. But it would be falling into a trap to try to resolve a particular situation by saying that we are not secular humanists or not humanists of type X but of type Y. Such a mode of defense is equivalent to abandoning the field to the attacking position but claiming personal virtue. If you take an oath that "I am not, nor have I ever been, a secular humanist," you will have surrendered your true ground, that of the American tradition of free inquiry. Scholars in the humanities are committed to a mode of life, and it is a mode that we can proclaim with pride.

3) We turn finally to the problem of the meaning of practicality. In some respects this is

most important, for it concerns self-doubt. Attacks from outside have a unifying effect and serve to compel clarification of our purposes. Self-doubt can be much more inhibiting. I have in mind the residual scepticism among many humanists of the practical intent of our program. They feel that by participating in projects they are somehow called upon to produce results. In the now standard examples, they are expected to relate *King Lear* to problems of gerontology, to draw lessons from *Oliver Twist* for day care centers, or about race prejudice from *Othello*. This seems to them to miss the central point of the humanities and to demand of humanists a practical competence which they do not have nor claim to have. These misgivings were recently formulated for the case of applied moral philosophy by Professor Annette Baier of the University of Pittsburgh, writing in the April 1981 issue of *Humanities*. Asking whether professional moral philosophers can be of any practical assistance to business people or to physicians, she decides in effect that they should stick to their unworldly and detached thinking, "that can, over many generations and after much nontheoretical testing, contribute to the quality of our contemplative life, and thus to the quality of our practical decisions." This is what she thinks happened to Locke and Hegel and Mill, and is likely to happen to Rawls. She fears that philosophers, trying to be practical, may engage in rationalizing existent practices or offer half-baked ideas.

I rather think that the experience of moral philosophy has other and different lessons for humanists. They may not be immediately apparent because of what happened in the discipline during the middle third of our century. Moral philosophy, at least in its most popular schools, largely withdrew from normative judgment and set up a Berlin wall between normative thought and the logical analysis of moral discourse. For a period the language of ethics alone became the legitimate subject matter of moral philosophy. Whether it was carried on in the formal language of positivism or the informal language of ordinary discourse, in both cases it became a very technical and very specialized "meta-ethics." When it looked back to the history of philosophy it focused on parts that helped such an inquiry. Then in the 1970s the pent up normative problems of our world burst upon us. Today moral philosophers are found working in problems of bio-ethics, technological ethics, legal ethics, business ethics; there are institutes that concentrate on environmental ethics, that deal with population problems and world hunger, and so on and on.

Several important points in this development should be noted. First, the outreach came from the professions, not the philosophers looking for work. It was accentuated in medicine by the new techniques of organ transplant and the like, but it also stemmed from the growth of long-time researches. Take an example. A medical professor was doing research on Huntington's chorea. For this he had to gather a population of people who now had the disease and another group in which there was reason to think it was latent. In short, in order to do his research he would have to alarm people who were going along in blissful ignorance, only a few of whom might later get the disease, and with no anticipation of a cure or prediction of incidence. Was it ethical to proceed ? He did not have an answer. Whom should he call to clarify and explore the issue? Somehow it reminded him of the kinds of questions his ethics professor had talked about years ago. So he phoned a philosopher.

Second, the appeal was not for answers or assigned imperatives, but for clarification of alternatives and presuppositions, for understanding. Those among you who have had experience of or are acquainted with the numerous humanist-in-residence programs that our councils have sponsored in hospitals, dentistry schools, nursing education, and even in small communities, will bear me out that successes have come not from laying down the line with answers, but from helping clarify problems, unravelling their complexities, and at the same time learning from the cooperation of people in the field. The story of the development of interdisciplinary cooperation on the treatment of human subjects is one of this sort. Take another example: a conference a few years ago between a group of designated humanists and the people in one of the major TV networks who check the suitability of dramas, sit-coms, and the like before they are used. They half hoped that humanists would provide for them a checklist of American values to which they could refer in their work, perhaps even have computerized. Instead, they got a sense of what a full-bodied character and a rich episode would be as developed in great literature with all its conflicts and ambivalences and indeterminacies. They welcomed the cautions against one-dimensionality. And the humanists got a better knowledge of the complexities of a practical decision.

Third, if we look back to the history of philosophy with open eyes and not just, as Santayana says of literary history, like a man looking over a crowd to find his friends, it is

clear that moral philosophers were constantly dealing with normative questions about the character of institutions and practices – forms of government, property, liberty, family, war, education, and the rest. Aristotle wrote his *Politics* not merely on the structure of ethical concepts; Locke on government, not merely epistemology; Hegel on law, not merely dialectical logic; Mill on liberty and economics, not merely on utilitarian ethical ideas. It was philosophical neglect in the twentieth century, not philosophical history, that gave us the strange idea that philosophy had no practical outreach. Indeed, even if the whole array of present normative ethics had not suddenly blossomed under new problems, the practical side of moral philosophy was always there in the great philosophers.

Fourth, I think a more careful history of moral philosophy – a much underdeveloped field – will show that moral philosophers were generally closer to the firing line in the past than Professor Baier suggests. Aristotle is dealing directly with the class conflicts of his time. Locke is working out a theory of limited government, of property, of the right to revolution, that is, if not tailor-made for the purpose, at least congenial to the bloodless revolution of 1688. Hume states the case against Mercantilism on the verge of the Industrial Revolution. Mill writes his *Representative Government* on the struggle for extension of the franchise and his writings on women and on liberty are directed to what he sees as the necessary reforms of his time. I am not talking of incidents in the lives of these philosophers, of which there are plenty, but of theoretical writings that, in Professor Baier's fine phrase, provide understanding that may (I would rather say *do)* make a difference.

Fifth, there is the question of immediacy. Why insist that philosophers should write for a future that might, after the seeping down of their thought, find it practical? This is exactly the line of argument that scientists used before they got to nuclear energy and recombinant genetics. But historians of technology see the temporal gap between pure science and its uses becoming shorter and shorter. Let me offer a poignant case from moral philosophy. Francis Biddle was President Truman's Attorney-General and instituted the loyalty program for federal employees in the 1940s, with its list of subversive organizations. When he saw how in due course the loyalty program blossomed onto a broad witch hunt, he wrote a book, *The Fear of Freedom* (1951), in which he reflected on the phenomena. He recalled the philosophical views of his professor, Josiah Royce, about the nature of loyalty. Royce, in his *The Philosophy of Loyalty* (1911), had argued that loyalty was ultimately to ideals. Biddle decided it was all wrong to ask people to be loyal to the government, that the government was the servant of the people and the master should not be asked to be loyal to the servant. Now, are we to say that Royce's work was detached theory in 1911 and became practical in 1951 in the light of Biddle's experiences in the 1940s? In any case it would have been practical had a project of the D.C. Community Humanities Council presented Royce's ideas for discussion in the early 1940s in relation to the then seething political problem of loyalty. Perhaps the Maine Council is now educating the Biddles of the north in its legislative relations program.

From these considerations I would like to draw two conclusions: one about the meaning of practicality, the other about the returns that practicality brings to the discipline that is concerned with it.

There is a narrow sense of practicality and there is a broad sense. I take it that Professor Baier was protesting against the narrow sense even though she did not do justice to the broad sense. The narrow sense is like the common use of "pragmatic" which equates it with expediency, often opportunism. The broad sense is like the distinctively American philosophy of pragmatism, which saw the purposive character of thought and took an experimental approach to ideas in terms of their consequences in human life, reflection, and action. In the broad sense, Rawls' book (*A Theory of Justice)* was practical, not just because it gave economists something to chew on when it used decision theory in relation to justice, but because it threw down the gauntlet in its fundamental principle of equality. It challenged meritocracy in a country that was struggling with problems of removing discrimination and of affirmative action. For Rawls postulated that everyone was entitled to equal shares except where a less equalitarian principle of distribution brought benefits to the disadvantaged as well; benefits to the greatest number was not enough. For this he was immediately branded by conservative opponents as a "New Equalitarian." The battle over equality and its proper forms is a practical struggle of our time, and ideas that make a difference in it are operating practically. In that sense *King Lear* helps in our understanding of the problems of elders and *Oliver Twist* sharpens our sense of what is wrong in the relations of adults and children. No narrow further practical application is needed.

Let me illustrate this broad practical sense in the case of humor. It is the last thing we would expect to be practical. But here are a couple of jokes – it is time to throw some into our discussion. One I recall from somewhere in Beard's work (Charles, not James; on American history, not the gourmet life); it is a nineteenth century joke about a congressional junket and reads something like this: "The train on which the congressmen were travelling was held up by robbers. After relieving the robbers of their watches and their purses, the congressmen went happily on their way." Could a practical attitude to the political life have been more pithily conveyed by a treatise on political science? My second example comes from a recent Sunday column of Russell Baker, attuned to Columbus Day of 1981. He writes in his blithely merry way about Columbus landing in the new world, asking the Indians "Where am I?" and then proclaiming that he has discovered America. Baker contrasts this with Julius Caesar landing in Britain, asking the natives about the country, and not claiming discovery but rather seeing it as a nice province to conquer. The practical lesson is biting in spite of its geniality. To celebrate the *discovery* of America is equivalent to saying that the Indians do not count. It is a practical lesson in ethnicity. We can still celebrate Columbus Day, but as a thanksgiving for our opportunities to get here.

This same illustration can make clear our second conclusion, that attention to broad practicality may bring fruitful returns to the discipline on its theoretical side. It has doubtless done that to many partipants in our programs. Suppose a historian writes a book examining the evidence whether Columbus or Lief Ericson discovered America. Would not the practical attention we noted change the very formulation of his project? It might even expand it to look for the relations of the newcomers and the natives, and who knows what this would mean for the historical inquiry. A recent review of a book on the history of slavery finds it otherwise excellent but comments on its omission of the experience of the slaves themselves, their feelings and predicament. No historian who had brought his historical learning to our many projects in which such aspects were central would have missed this dimension. Here attentiveness to the practical impact of history would have enriched the discipline itself. This, I think, will happen to the theories of moral philosophy when the vast present extension into practice brings its lessons back to moral theory. Our very conceptions of the nature and tasks of moral theory will be transformed and much theoretical analysis will be required for the reconstruction. I leave it to you in the different humanistic disciplines to decide how far this holds equally for the study of literature when it goes beyond the skeleton of the legal system to the new impact of law on the lives of people; to linguistics when its criteria of proper usage are shaken by the practice of common dialects; and so on for discipline after discipline. Such inquiries call for an expertise which I do not have, but which collectively you do. Perhaps my example from philosophy can be a useful paradigm.

A final question, particularly for the historians among you. Do you know of any program in the past that ever attempted to move into the whole adult public, to engage its participation, not simply to bring good works to them, and geared to their felt concerns, not merely ours? Has there ever before been such a program sponsored by government? If it is as distinctive as it appears to be, then it is as dramatic as a moonshot. In any case, it is an experiment in the relation of democracy and culture that is priceless. For the humanities is a name for the best of the past applied to learning in the present. I do not misjudge the experience of the state councils if I say that the reception has been increasingly one of welcome. Perhaps the lesson of our work could be encapsulated in advice from the Surgeon-General's Office about the humanities:

WARNING: The humanities are habit-forming, and they are contagious.

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